

# CHRISTIAN COURIER

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## Protecting endangered species a risky venture



PHOTOS: COURTESY ENVIRONMENT CANADA

The burrowing owl, one of Canada's endangered species.

**Alan Doerksen**

EDMONTON—Environmental experts are welcoming the federal government's new plan to protect endangered species, but they question how well it will actually work.

Although at least four provinces have adopted endangered species legislation, Canada has no national endangered species act. Environment Minister David Anderson insists, "Canada has been committed to introducing new legislation on species at risk since we became the first industrialized country to ratify the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992."

That agreement committed Canada to "develop or maintain necessary legislation ... for the protection of threatened species and populations." Since then, the government has held extensive consultations about this issue.

"We have learned from our consultation," says Anderson.

"One message that has come through loud and clear is that we cannot address the issue of protecting species without at the same time addressing the issue of critical habitat. Scientists tell us that the major reason for species loss is the destruction of habitat.... Therefore, the government's strategy, and the new Species At Risk Act (SARA) legislation, will address habitat issues directly."

The government says its strategy consists of three main parts:

- Building on partnerships with the provinces and territories through the 1996 Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk.

- Promoting stewardship and incentive programs to assist private landowners, land users, Aboriginal peoples and conservation organizations to protect species and their habitats.

- The Environment Canada says: "The government's approach would emphasize providing

assistance to help Canadians take voluntary actions to protect species and their habitats, and create a climate which makes responsible stewardship an easy choice."

- Introducing the new SARA early this year, which Anderson says will "give us the legal tools to implement this strategy, including the tools to protect species and their critical habitats from destruction."

The government's strategy would encourage stewardship and care for endangered species through funding and other incentives. The Environment Department website shows a successful example of this strategy: Operation Burrowing Owl, which involves some 700 landowners in Alberta and Saskatchewan who

protect the nesting areas of this endangered species.

The Species At Risk Act contains these key elements:

**Listing of endangered species:** This process "would balance impartial scientific judgment with political accountability," says Environment Canada. Assessing and identifying species at risk will continue to be done by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), which operates at arm's length from the government. COSEWIC would report to the Environment Minister, who would present the list to government for adoption.

**Prohibitions:** The new legislation would provide a "federal safety net," which would protect any threatened or endangered

species which are not effectively protected by provincial or territorial legislation.

**Recovery:** Recovery activities for each endangered species would be co-ordinated by a Recovery Team, which would bring together the best available scientific, traditional and local knowledge to define long- and short-term recovery objectives.

**Compensation:** The new SARA would provide compensation for landowners with endangered species on their land.

**Compliance:** The government also plans measures to ensure compliance with the act, and effective enforcement of it.

Environment Canada wants to protect species in partnership with  
**See ENDANGERED page 2...**

## Jesuit priest-astronomer not eager to link the heavens, heaven

**Alan Doerksen**

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Billions of years ago, God could not have predicted that there would be

life in universe, according to George Coyne, a Jesuit priest and astronomer. Coyne was a keynote speaker at Brock University's

"Spirituality, Science and Ethics" conference, held in St. Catharines in late January.

**See JESUIT page 3...**



KITTE PEAK NATIONAL OBSERVATORY PHOTO

The Lagoon Nebula, which is 60 light years across and 6,500 light years away from earth.

## The RETURN to VIRTUE



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The virtuous life (humor), p. 15



# Endangered species strategy faces skeptics

nition that everyone has a stewardship responsibility," he says. The American approach to protecting endangered species is quite different from SARA. Wood observes. For one thing, the U.S. government has more authority in this area than the states do, compared to the Canadian division of powers between Ottawa and the provinces. If a species is endangered in the U.S., "the government is compelled to act, by law," says Wood. But the proposed Canadian law has no "automatic trigger. That's a profound difference."

## Selective hearing

The SARA proposals would give the ultimate authority on designating endangered species to the federal cabinet, an approach Wood says is "history has shown repeatedly that politicians have selected hearing." Wood asserts. For instance, when scientists told the federal government that cod fish were threatened, the government didn't listen until it was too late to save the fish. Wood contends.

Environment Minister Anderson has stated that his strategy "would provide a focal point for a made-in-Canada approach to avoid U.S.-style litigious legislation." But Wood says, "I'd much rather have people in court than civil disobedience."

Anderson is "attempting here to put the emphasis on co-operation, to get people involved at various levels. In that sense, he's right."

## Step in right direction

Jennifer Chiang, professor of biology at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ont., says SARA is "a step in the right direction." But she is concerned that the government is focussing on individual species while neglecting the big

Alma Doeksen EDMONTON, Alta. — Although some environmentalists are encouraged by the federal government's new endangered species strategy, Alberta Environment Minister Gary Mar is strongly against it. Mar described the proposed legislation as a "sharp stick in the eye of the province" and an "intrusion on provincial responsibilities," reports the *Edmonton Journal*. "The federal legislation is not

# Alberta government opposes federal endangered species strategy

Mar predicted that the federal strategy "will have the opposite effect of what was intended. I will oppose it in any way that I can that has merit." He asserted, "I don't plan on wasting anyone's time or anyone's resources, but I will take any reasonable challenge and look at all the options for such a challenge." Mar confirmed that this might include legal action.

Mar argued that the federal plan is not needed because Alberta has a Wildlife Act, which has been in effect for 25 years. "We had our legislation evaluated by the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy, and their review ... was that with minor changes, we were well positioned to meet our obligations under the endangered species act," says Clements. "The value of protecting an endangered species comes from Romans 1:20."

Dr. David Clements, professor of plant ecology at Trinity-Western University in Langley, B.C., is "very supportive" of the proposed state of Washington is compensating farmers for not farming close to rivers (so as to protect fish), and this has been working well.

Clements approves of the biblical concept of "stewardship of creation," as found in Genesis 2:15. Clements approves of the government's focus on incentives rather than enforcement. "Enforcement is very difficult because there isn't much manpower out there" to do it. Looking at the issue of compensation, Clements notes that the state of Washington is compensating farmers for not farming close to rivers (so as to protect fish), and this has been working well.

Chiang is also uncertain about how well compensation would work. "It's difficult to mandate [compensation] and have it work successfully.... I'm not really sure if it would be respected."

But Chiang approves of the government's plan to work in partnership with Aboriginals. "I think it's important to form as many partnerships as possible."

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PHOTOS COURTESY ENVIRONMENT CANADA

Aboriginal people and rural communities. Its website states, "Indigenous people and rural communities are at risk from 340 species at risk found on Indian reserve lands, demonstrating the stewardship of First Nations people.... The government will continue to work closely with Aboriginal peoples to ensure their participation in species assessment and recovery efforts."

## 'Cutting the Gordian knot'

John Wood, professor of environmental science at the King's University College in Edmonton (and CC columnist), sees some good elements in the proposed species protection law, but he is sceptical about how effective it will be. "It's going to be a couple of decades before this works out," he says. "We just have to wait and see.... It's worth a try, but it could fail."

One challenge the Canadian government faces is balancing federal and provincial responsibilities for protection of species. "They're trying to cut the Gordian knot here," observes Wood. "The Canadian government does not control the kind of land the American government controls. Natural resources are a provincial matter.... It remains to be seen how the provincial governments are going to co-operate."

"The second level of difficulty is the government/private property relationship," Wood notes. "You have to balance the public needs and the private needs." Because of the government/private property relationship, Wood notes, "You have to balance the public needs and the private needs."

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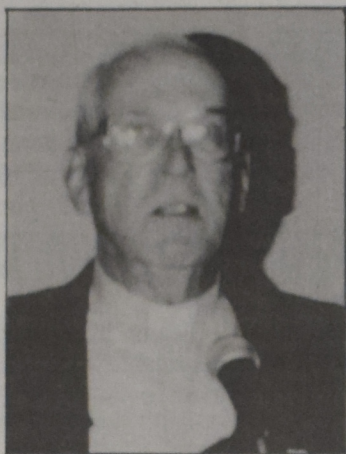
## News

# Jesuit astronomer questions omniscience of God

... continued from page 1

In a lecture entitled "When the sacred cows of science and religion meet," Coyne expressed his view that we need to rethink the concept of "an omnipresent, omniscient God." In his opinion, God is more like "a parent, a generator." Seeing God in these limited terms, Coyne says, God could not have predetermined that life would arise in the universe.

Coyne is director of the Vatican Observatory in Rome and in Arizona. Since 1969, he has worked with the Vatican as an astronomer.



George Coyne

## Idolatry of religion and science

"There is an idolatry associated with both religion and science which must be admitted before it can be cared for," said Coyne. He compared this idolatry with the Israelites' worship of a golden calf during the Exodus. After meeting with God on Mount Sinai, Moses "came down from the mountain and found people worshipping a golden calf. It was made with their hands. It had to have a rational content to it. They wanted a name. On both accounts, they were idolatrous," Coyne asserted.

"God cannot be seen the way a golden calf can," he said. In religion, "we see only a part and the rest is yet to come." Coyne contrasted a religious worldview with scientism, which is the philosophical notion that refuses to believe anything but science.

Looking back through history, Coyne explored how ancient people considered the stars. For instance, Stonehenge was "at one and the same time an astronomical observatory and a place of worship." The builders of Stonehenge

wanted to know how the stars influenced the way they lived on earth.

The ancient Greeks "saw their heroes in the heavens," and named constellations such as Orion after their heroes. But the stars in the constellation Orion "have nothing to do with each other physically," he noted.

As he showed slides of various stars, galaxies and nebulae, Coyne explained how stars are born and die.

## We are stardust

"We [humans] are literally, scientifically made of stardust," Coyne contended. This, he believes, is because stars convert lighter elements, such as hydrogen, into all the heavier elements. "Only stars can make heavier elements," said Coyne. "If not, you or I wouldn't be here."

Eventually, some stars become supernovae, and explode. "The stars die and they blow out material into the universe," said Coyne.

One area Coyne has studied is the formation of planets, something he says is "not a miracle. It happened by ordinary physical laws." He has observed disks of material orbiting stars which he thinks are "planets beginning to be born."

Coyne was ambivalent about whether or not there is intelligent life on other planets. "As a scientist, there is no evidence for or against," he said. But, he observed, "Statistically, it's absolutely certain there are the conditions for life elsewhere in the universe."

"There's far more ignorance in cosmology than knowledge," admitted Coyne. He likened the relative ignorance of astronomers to a house-builder who is not really sure what a brick is. Astronomers try to reconstruct the development of the universe by looking at distant galaxies, which is similar to looking back through time, explained Coyne.

Connecting the topics of science and faith, Coyne attempted to explain how human life and intelligence came to be. He believes that the universe was 12 billion years old before the first microscopic life appeared, because there had to be three generations of stars before there could be life.

"In this evolving universe, the human brain came to be through a complexification process," according to science, said Coyne. "Did it happen by chance or necessity? There is a third element: opportunity. The universe is so old, so big, that life - to a certain extent - had to come to be."

Chance is one reason for the formation of life, but Coyne added, "God has loaded the dice."

Coyne asserted, "There is no

religion which intends to give a scientific explanation" of the formation of the universe. "That's not the stuff of religion." For instance, the book of Genesis is "not talking about the origin of the universe [but] talking about God."

## 'How to go to heaven'

Quoting another Roman Catholic scholar, Coyne said, "The Scriptures teach us not how the heavens go, but how to go to heaven." Coyne was asked by one listener when scientific knowledge will be incorporated into church dogma. "Don't expect it in tomorrow's newspaper!" Coyne replied. But he added, "I don't fault the church for going slow on this. You accommodate the new with the old - that is not easily done."

Coyne's speech was the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Thomas Aquinas lecture held at Brock University. The lecture was part of Brock's fifth annual conference on Spirituality, Science and Ethics, which was presented by the Brock Philosophical Society and co-sponsored and funded by the Templeton Foundation.

Philosophy professor David Goicoechea, who helped organize the three-day conference, commented that Coyne "doesn't think of God as a perfect being who knows everything.... What he wanted to emphasize was the chance in the universe.... God creates and stands aside, and lets the universe unfold."

The second key lecture at the conference was a talk on "Intimations of Transcendence: Cosmos and the Underlying Order," given by Prof. George Ellis, a professor of applied mathematics at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. In that lecture, Ellis showed how in the various sciences there is always a "top-down and bottom-up causality" that points to the existence of God, said Goicoechea.

This contrasts with Coyne's view that the only way to know God is through faith, although the universe reflects who God is. Ellis, a Quaker, is co-author, with Stephen Hawking, of the book *The Large Scale Structure of Space Time*.

## Good Friday school holiday not unconstitutional: U.S. Supreme Court

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Religion Today) - A Maryland law requiring public schools to close on Good Friday is constitutional, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled January 18. The justices rejected an appeal by Judith Koenick, a retired teacher, who said the law violates the separation of church and state and "sends a message of inclusion to Christian children and a message of exclusion to their Jewish, Muslim, and nonbelieving classmates."

A lower court had ruled that the law serves the "pragmatic, legitimate secular purpose" of avoiding high absenteeism among teachers and students on the days surround-

ing Easter. Many people travel over the "increasingly secularized holiday of Easter," school board lawyers argued. Thirteen states

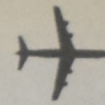
designate Good Friday as a legal holiday but only Maryland, Illinois and North Dakota require schools to close.

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## Editorial

# Putting on the armor of God

## Harry der Nederlanden

In one of John Updike's short stories, the main character is watching a young athlete perform a high-dive. It seems to him perfection incarnate: as if in that moment the divine intersected with the earthly. All of us, I think, can recall such moments. Epiphanies. Moments of Presence. You are left shaken, and hungry. You get a sudden, piercing foretaste of the fusion of heaven and earth, of life's every moment infused, shot through, filled full of meaning.

We tend to think of ethics and morality as a parental hand that slaps aside our fingers as we reach for the hot stove. A superior wisdom steers us away from potential disasters that we do not anticipate, and toward the right way. Distance predominates. We are kept from harm.

But there's more than that. The moral life, which is to say life in its fundamental motives and purposes, is also a quest for excellence, for that experience of fusion, that coming together of our will and work with God's will and work. T.S. Eliot in one of his poems speaks of burning with a clear, pure flame, a line that cuts to the quick.

There's a way of talking about the moral life that does not focus first of all on laws or rules but that talks about traits or qualities that we ought to embody. This is the virtue tradition. Honesty, integrity, civility, chastity, generosity – these are virtues that

almost anyone will recognize as such. If everyone were honest and civil to one another, think of how our society would be transformed. And these are but simple, social virtues.

## Personifying virtue

The ancient poets portrayed them as personified powers that possess us as much as we possess them. Just as a king has advisors so we have Charity or Justice advising us how to proceed. But they are more than an internal voice like Conscience (another personification); they are a kind of moral muscle that grows stronger with exercise. The more you practice honesty the more honest you become, until it becomes second nature to you. You yourself become a personification of honesty.

You model that virtue. By so doing, you radiate the meaning and purpose of life. You embody and shine forth something larger than yourself. And, so the theory goes, you become contagious: others will recognize the excellence, the extra-ordinary good in you and will emulate you. Coveting the excellence they see in you, they will also pursue it as you do.

This, of course, assumes that we're attracted to goodness or virtue. Not perhaps a safe assumption to make. It seems more likely that we are attracted to the appearance of virtue, its power to confer recognition. Virtue implies a pursuit of excellence: to achieve it, one must excel. This puts life into the comparative degree: better, greater, more than....

## Life in the comparative

Shakespeare, in one of his plays (*Troilus and Cressida*), explores the idea of heroism and the comparative. The Trojan War was, we all know, launched by competition for the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen of Troy. The men who fought over her were the best of their respective societies. One of the Trojan heroes is described as a man distilled out of many parts; he is a composite, like those fantastic creatures composed by children of parts from many different animals. Here, acquiring virtue becomes a violent process. Imitation becomes a process of one-upmanship: virtue becomes a scarce commodity for which we must compete.

I'm reminded of the typical western: the young gunman acquires his reputation by being faster than the hero. This is a kind of imitation dangerous to the one being imitated. One acquires the other's virtue and visibility by killing him. To a less lethal degree, this is true in many fields: athletes hone their natural gifts to achieve excellence, which means to become known as the best in the world, to set records. They do so by being better than others, by displacing previous heroes and erasing their records.

## The tyranny of virtue

In many fields of study, ambitious students must compete with others to be accepted into a program and into the best universities, and then they work to graduate at the top of their class. We call this a meritocracy, a system that allows those with the most merit or virtue to rise to the top.

I realize that I'm painting with a rather wide

brush here. I've gone from the praise of virtue to exposing the violence of virtue. Is this really part of our normal experience? Who hasn't at some time in life run into a paragon of virtue who is at the same time a tyrant of virtue? Self-disciplined, orderly, self-motivated, committed, dynamic, industrious, determined, responsible, authoritative, a person of many gifts, he or she is, nevertheless, hard on those nearest.

Many hugely talented parents intimidate and dis-enable their children by absorbing them into their own ambitions, their own visions. Freud thought he saw this tension between every father and son (yes, sexism), and thought it necessary for every son to symbolically kill his father in order to achieve independence.

Contrary to most of our mystery and murder movies with their evil villains, Scripture does not portray sin as rooted in human villainy. Jesus' primary antagonists were not murderers, robbers, or prostitutes; they were good, self-disciplined people with high ideals and commitments – people like ourselves.

This is the deep scandal of the Good News: the shattering realization that even our best systems and methods for civilizing and humanizing ourselves end up betraying us.

## Clothing ourselves, being clothed

This is, I believe, why Christianity has had problems getting dressed in the morning. When we dress ourselves, we tend to swipe prized articles from others. Some, like Kierkegaard, seem to suggest we should, as it were, sally forth in the nude.

Not Paul. He exhorts us to clothe ourselves in a vast wardrobe of virtues – compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and more. In another place he speaks of donning the armor of God, as if to turn us into Greek heroes. But we are told to put on the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. You can't buy these at the hero's haberdashery. Nor can you strip them off the dead bodies of your opponents.

These you can get only by putting yourself to death. The prophet Isaiah, after lamenting the lack of justice and truth in Israel and the world and seeing nothing but darkness, pictures God arming himself to intervene in our behalf (Isa. 59). God puts on the very virtues that Paul exhorts us to put on.

How can we appropriate God's own armor, God's own attributes? "Clothe yourselves with the

How can we appropriate God's own armor, God's own attributes? "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ," says Paul. To do so, we must die with him first. But Paul goes even further: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Outrageous! Almost blasphemous! That scene in Isaiah in which God is bucking on his breastplate and donning his helmet? That's us he's putting on, says Paul. This is possible only because in Christ we've first taken the sword not to our neighbor but to ourselves and to the precious virtues we've worked so hard to acquire.

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## Letters/Opinion

## Why are we shy about helping Christians persecuted by Muslims?

Being of Reformed persuasion I always take pride in the fact that most of those in the Reformed tradition show compassion for their fellow human beings in need. It could be a next-door neighbor, a flood victim or victim of war.

We did the shoebox thing at Christmas;

we went to the local mission; and more.

And then, just recently, some people in our church got all excited over Muslim refugees from Kosovo, spending time, money and energy, surely all noble sentiments. As a matter of fact, the world said the Christian Reformed Church did [a good job in that

regard]. Why, then, does Joshua Chaptel pop into my head? (in which the Gibeon trick Joshua and Israel into signing a treaty with them because they had heard that Israel always put its enemies to the sword as God had required of them).

Then I read in the *Winnipeg Free Press* January 9 article by [well-known syndicated columnist] Gwynne Dyer. He asks the question: Why don't the world's Christians upset at the persecution of thousands of other Christians? Why don't we get excited

about helping our fellow Christians who are being burned out and killed by the thousands? Just in the last few months Muslims attacked and killed Christians in Egypt, Indonesia, Kosovo, the Moluccas and the Sudan.

We would not possibly ignore these brothers and sisters because we know what it is to be politically correct, would we?

Thank you for listening.

N. Hogeveen

Winnipeg, Manitoba

## Wants clarification about how to read the Bible

I echo the sentiments of reader/letter-writer Fenna Groen from Brampton, Ontario. I also find some articles in your paper hard to read. A case in point is the editorial of January 24 by Andrew Kuyvenhoven.

He writes a rather complicated explanation of how to read the Bible. After reading it several times I still don't fully understand what his position is or what he is trying to say. There are a few things that he could clarify for me however, in plain simple English. How is a Christian to read the Bible?

Are we to read the Bible literally, and accept

it word for word, or can we read it in light of knowledge available today (for example the earth is round and orbits around the sun)? What about the creation story? Are we to accept that as fact, or can we subscribe to the evolution theory? What about the cultural practices mentioned in the Old Testament? And sexual mores? Is everything written in the Bible as relevant today as it was then? In other words: where do we draw the line?

Gary Terpstra  
Waterloo, Ontario

## Advice on avoiding trial by fire

Two important dates in Frisian history: 754 AD: missionary Boniface was murdered near Dokkum.

2000 AD: A global reunion planned for all Frisians [a cultural-historical celebration to be held this summer in the Dutch province of Friesland, about which CC has carried story and ads].

Through the grapevine it came to my attention that a representative of the Frisian Christian community in Canada is going

to address the Frisians in the Netherlands while celebrating that great event. His topic is: "Did God also immigrate to Canada?"

This man must have the zeal and courage of the ancient missionary Boniface. Considering the facts of history, it may be advisable for this gentleman to avoid the area of Dokkum.

Herman Dekker  
Grand Bend, Ontario

## Poetry's relation to virtue: Sir Philip Sidney revisited

Miriam Schulman

From Horace to Percy Bysshe Shelley, writers have long held that literature is an effective teacher of morality. Indeed, in his "Apology for Poetry," the great 16th-century English poet Sir Philip Sidney argues that poets (and, by extension, writers of fiction) are the very best teachers of virtue.

Assuming that "the ending end of all earthly learning [is] virtuous action," Sidney suggests that there are two ways to achieve that end: by precept or by example. Precept is the province of the philosopher, who may be a worthy fellow, but who is inclined, in Sidney's view, to be a little dull. The message, he maintains, needs packaging. Poets do this, Sidney says, by using examples that "delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger, and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved."

Sidney's formulation contains three terms that have figured in discussions of literature's ethical possibilities for centuries: to delight, to teach and to move.

[These] crop up in William Bennett's introduction to *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* [see more about this book in the theme articles in this issue].... Stories do not, on their own, lead to virtue, which Bennett himself recognizes. He offers his book as an aid in the moral education of the young. Other aspects of that task include, as he says, instruction, exhortation, training, and example....

If we're hoping to move our children to act ethically, then we must read them stories containing real dilemmas. By discussing these choices, we can help children understand how we arrive at our own moral stance so, when the time comes for them to go to the zoo or to the island of the Cyclopes without us, they will avoid becoming dinner for the inhabitants....

An excerpt from "Moral Literacy: The Virtue of The Book of Virtues" by Miriam Schulman, editor of *Issues in Ethics*.

## Appreciative of CC's ongoing work

When excellent editor Bert Witvoet came down from his perch, I wondered: What now?

I shouldn't have! Marian Van Til is doing fine work. In the January 10, 2000, issue I was especially appreciative of Dr. James

Payton's timely article, the interview with Chuck Colson and the two excellent reviews by Harry DenNederlander and Gideon Strauss. Thank you!

Peter Nicolai  
Chatham, Ontario

**For a quick Letter to the Editor, please send an e-mail to: [cceditor@aol.com](mailto:cceditor@aol.com), or send it by fax to: (905) 682-8313.**

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## Media

## Christian broadcasters in U.S. mobilize against unfavorable ruling

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — Religious broadcasters, aided by some lawmakers, are launching a campaign against a U.S. federal ruling which they believe could lead to government controls on the type of programming they can air.

The campaign comes in response to a December decision by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) involving a license transfer between a public television affiliate and a religious TV station in Pittsburgh. The FCC determined that not all religious programming qualifies as educational.

The distinction is important because noncommercial TV broadcasters are eligible for special channels reserved for educational programming. In its ruling the FCC said qualifying broadcasters must devote at least half of their regularly scheduled airtime to educational programs. In its definition of educational programs, the FCC said programming "primarily devoted to religious exhortation, proselytizing or statements of personally held religious views and beliefs generally would not qualify as 'general educational' programming."

In a footnote the FCC said church services generally would not qualify as "general educational" programming, either. The two exceptions to that policy are services which are part of a historic event, such as the funeral of a national leader, or a service intended to serve the educational or cultural needs of a community.

The FCC's decision affects only a limited number of noncommercial television stations, but religious broadcasters fear it's a signal that the government plans to pass judgment on certain types of religious programs.

### 'Disquieting implication'

National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) sent a letter to 1,200 of its members criticizing the ruling. "The order contains a disquieting implication that the government may restrict certain strains of religious speech — disfavoring more passionate and emotional expressions of faith — while not constraining others that are more 'intellectual' and drained of human emotion," wrote NRB president Brandt Gustavson.

The FCC estimates that about 20 of the U.S.'s 373 educational television stations are religious broadcasters. Most religious broadcasters operate on commercial frequencies and are not affected by the ruling.

Despite the ruling's limited impact, the FCC has drawn sharp criticism from lawmakers who charge that commission is trying to control religious expression.

"The Commission has no business ... singling out religious programming for special scrutiny," four Republican congressmen wrote in a letter to FCC chair Bill Kennard. "The policy you have implemented amounts to an unconstitutional restriction on religious speech. This type of content regulation and suppression is utterly unacceptable," continued Reps. Michael Oxley (Ohio), Steve Largent (Oklahoma), Chip Pickering (Mississippi), and Cliff Stearns (Florida).

Oxley, who is vice-chair of the

House Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Trade, and Consumer Protection, introduced legislation to reverse the new FCC guideline when Congress reconvened January 24.

"In our free society, the FCC has no business suppressing the expression of religious belief," Oxley said. "I know the FCC will try to put a good face on this action, but the simple truth is the commission is restricting those who express faith. This is wrong, and it cannot stand."

### Found a 'test case'

The FCC ruling came in response to a request by religious broadcaster Cornerstone Television for the reserve license held by a PBS affiliate in Pittsburgh.

The Dec. 29 decision permitted PBS station WQED in to swap one of its two stations for Cornerstone Television's WPCB in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, in anticipation of that station's sale to Paxson Communications.

FCC guidelines require that educational licenses be used to serve a community's "educational needs" but did not define that term. In reviewing the proposed license transfer, the commission created a definition.

### Opening Pandora's box

Two FCC commissioners, Harold Furchtgott-Roth and Michael Powell, dissented from the decision and attacked the new guidelines as vague and constitutionally suspect. They said the regulations "may open a Pandora's Box of problems that will create confusion and litigation that noncommercial licensees can ill afford," and called the guidelines an "unwarranted ... federal intrusion [into] evaluating licensee programming decisions."

Conservative News Service reported that a high-ranking source at the FCC confirmed that the agency "has had [religious broadcasters] in their sights for at least a year." The source said "certain commissioners have been discussing how best to rein in NCETV (noncommercial educational television) licensees for a while, on separation of church and state grounds. They've been looking for a test case, and they found one in this license swap."

This FCC ruling should not be confused with the persistent but unfounded rumor that atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hare had petitioned the FCC to strip religious broadcasters of their licenses.

## If God had wanted us to be polar bears...

Frank DeVries

It was the early afternoon of New Year's Day, 2000. Hundreds of people were milling about and around a group of some 100 folk dressed in beach blankets and sleeping bags: big, small, old and young, all shivering about in clumps of humanity ready to do their thing in the cold ocean water.



Some walked in, barefoot, to test the temperature, only to hastily run back with loud yelps. One man, whose very skinny legs supported a massive body topped by a red toque, paraded in front of the crowd dressed in extremely small and even more extremely light swimming trunks. Above his knees, his stick legs blossomed into massive triangles of blue flesh until they came to large layers of blubber that rolled up from his lower belly, up to his neck, where they dissolved into the more moderate waves of an elongated double chin: his generous body mass was reminiscent of that of the Michelin Man.

One woman, probably somewhere in her late-50s, with ropes of hair like that of Medusa surrounding her face, walked around with a placard that urged us to fight off planned highrises in the town nearby, and to Save the Environment. She wore a interesting homemade pair of shorts bordered by a sewn-on strip of lace, while a large brown shawl covered nearly all of her not insignificant torso. She had a colorfully embroidered knitted hat on her head, and she walked around with a perpetual beatific smile on her face.

### Ready, set, go!

Several Coast Guard persons in survival suits waded into the water and began to mark off with flags the area where all those bent on suicide by freezing were supposed to go, and finally a man with a loudhailer asked if everyone was ready to go in, even though it was still a few minutes before the scheduled time.

That suggestion met with loud, hysterical approval, and the countdown began, everybody (including us) joining in: 10, 9, 8, 7 ..., until at zero they all ran down the beach incline into the icy seawater. For about half of their number, it didn't last long.

Almost immediately many came running up the incline considerably faster than they had gone down it, registering immense shock, eyes stark, large and unbelieving. One mother came running back clutching in her arms her two- or three-year-old girl in a red bathing suit, the girl screaming at the top of her lungs.

In the meantime, Michelin Man floated back at the very edge of the marked-off area, with (initially) an intensely happy and contented look on his face: he had nothing to worry about, as many layers of blubber protected him from the cold as if her were a human seal floating among the Bering Strait ice floes. But the lady with the placard easily topped the popularity charts that day.

To the great joy of a number of teenaged boys nearby, Ms. Placard had doffed her shawl and had waded into the freezing water topless, jingle bells clanging in the wind. She came out very quickly, however, her smile vanished.

I understood that. I well recall the days of my youth when I belonged to AZC, the water polo club of which I had been a valued member for many years. When we trained in an outdoor pool three times a week at 6:30 in the morning in waters that frequently registered temperatures as low as 16 or 15 degrees Celsius, it was a common occurrence that not only smiles but body parts simply disappeared, only to resurface after a considerable lapse of time.

When we finally drove away in our snugly warm automobile, the last thing we saw was a gently bobbing, great red-toque-topped face contorted into a grin that, however blissful it superficially appeared, may well have been the rictus indicating that he was *in extremis*. 2000 had begun!

Frank DeVries is a retired teacher/principal who lives in Nanaimo, B.C.



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## Arts/Media

# 'Who wants to ... eat?'

Ron De Boer

I couldn't miss the irony. On the cover of a November 1999 issue of *Entertainment Weekly*, one of the most widely read magazines in North America, decked out in a suit made of thousand-dollar bills, was Regis Philbon, host of "Who Wants to be A Millionaire." Inside, Regis, the new game show poster-boy and the latest media flash-in-the-pan, stands in a bank vault surrounded by piles of cash.

That night on a *Saturday Night Live* spoof of the game show called "Who Wants to Eat?," a Kosovar refugee sits in the contestant's chair playing for a bowl of rice, bag of wheat and a goat, while a heartless Regis impersonator will not even let her *smell* the rice when she is unable to answer such inane questions as: "In America, what is the name of the eating disorder in which people starve themselves?"

"Why would anyone purposely starve herself?" queries the perplexed refugee before she is whisked off the set. "Regis" loses his composure momentarily then displays his million dollar smile to introduce the next contestants.

Unless you live in a field, you will have heard of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire," the game show whose producers consciously deleted the question mark at the end of the title because it's really not a question, is it?

Everyone wants to be a millionaire, right? For those of you who don't follow trivial matters, "Who Wants to be A Millionaire" hit the scene in the latter part of last year. It had a purposely limited run at first, but has now been put on the regular ABC schedule. It is hosted by morning talk show star Regis Philbon.

## What's the attraction?

Contestants wishing to be on the show have to phone in to answer three timed questions. If they pass, they are flown to New York and invited to compete against nine other contestants in answering a question. If they beat out the others, they are invited to sit in "the chair" and try to win a million dollars by answering multiple choice questions on TV, politics, music and even the Bible.

Other networks are cashing in on the success of the trivia-for-big-bucks formula, most notably, the overbearing version called *Greed*, Fox Network's offering in which contestants can win two million dollars by answering questions ranging from the smells of vegetables to the sizes of cities.

Why are viewers going crazy over game shows again, despite its early television history of manipu-



Regis Philbon, host of "Who Wants to be A Millionaire."

lating and duping audiences? (Rent the movie "Quiz Show" for a good look at that phenomenon.) The reasons are twofold and can be found among the seven deadly sins of the great poet Dante's day: *greed* and *pride*. We all wish to become suddenly rich; we are all filled with pride when we know the answers.

## Vicarious satisfaction

As the black comedy of the SNL episode communicates effectively, these "money-grabbing" game shows like "Millionaire" are symptoms of a Western culture bent on chasing down money – preferably big money, fast money. Consider the success of lotteries, sports gambling, video slot machines and casinos.

Game shows allow us to view vicariously every-day-Joes and -Janes answering "easy" questions for big bucks. We viewers answer the question along with the contestant and feel good knowing we could win. As observers, we are "rewarded" when we know and not "punished" when we don't.

Should we watch if contestants merely amassed points to win products? As Christians, are we being drawn into the thrill of seeing someone – an ordinary citizen plucked by "destiny" from the masses – become a millionaire?

If we buy into the fact that watching game shows is vicarious – we see ourselves as the contestant – how close does our watching come to coveting riches? Do we really believe the love of money is the root of all evil?

## Trivia is 'important'

Or are we watching because knowledge of trivia is respected in our culture? The popularity of "Jeopardy," TV's current long-running trivia game show, is testament that we love racking our brains over life's details (but that show requires contestants to be extraordinarily knowledgeable in a

number of areas). It raises our self-esteem and builds us up in the eyes of those who don't know the answers.

Back in the '80s, "Trivial Pursuit" rushed into our consciousness and living rooms as one of the most popular board games of all time. "This question is for a pie," was a phrase as recognizable as Regis' "Is that your final answer?" on "Millionaire."

We have become a culture obsessed with trivia, and the media unconsciously shapes the obsession by serving up a daily smorgasbord of record temperatures, sports statistics, Angus-Reid polls, famous quotes, murder tallies and celebrity "news."

We have become "busy" with trivia and some believe important issues such as religion, family and government take a back seat to scoring statistics, knowledge about clothing labels and commercials.

Science fiction novelist Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* conveys the idea that we bury ourselves in the mundane, keeping our minds from government and corporate decisions.

We don't have an opinion about the bank merger but we're thrilled the Leafs have the third-best power play in the league.

More recently, Canadian author Douglas Coupland's novel *Girlfriend in a Coma* portrayed a world in a cultural coma in which citizens care more about the *TV Guide* than their spirituality and place in the universe.

## Where do we stand?

We Christians can heed the warning of Solomon in Ecclesiastes when he says the pursuit of worldly treasure is a "chasing after the wind." The words of Mark 8:36 also come to mind: "What good is it to gain the whole world and forfeit your soul?"

This brings up a further question: Is taking pleasure watching others "chase after the wind" any more honorable?

But there's more. Television is pushing the envelope even further with "Survivor," a game show which plays itself out on an island where contestants "survive" a certain time in the jungle accompanied by alligators and other dangerous situations. Also, there's a Fox network show called "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?" I'm looking forward to *Saturday Night Live's* parody of that one!

Ron DeBoer teaches at Eastwood Collegiate Institute in Kitchener, Ontario, and is author of the "Lightbringer" series of novels for young adults. He can be reached at [rondebo@enoreo.on.ca](mailto:rondebo@enoreo.on.ca)

## Major Lutheran publisher expands operation in Canada

### Hires former EFC/Tyndale vice-prez

MINNEAPOLIS (AFP) – The large Lutheran publisher Augsburg Fortress has announced plans to begin expansion in the Canadian publishing market. To help that process Augsburg Fortress Canada has hired a former executive vice-president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Larry N. Willard, as its executive director.

Willard, who was also formerly the vice-president for institutional advancement, operations and communications at Tyndale College and Seminary in Toronto, took over the job on January 3. Willard has had lengthy management assignments with Xerox Canada and Apple Computers in sales, marketing, and customer service as well. And he holds a Masters of Divinity from Tyndale Seminary.

Willard will be responsible for the development and execution of Augsburg Fortress Publishers Canadian operational and strategic plans, which includes distributing products from Augsburg Fortress Publishers in the United States, and distributing Concordia Publishing House products.

"We believe our business in Canada has the potential to double in size rather quickly," said an Augsburg Fortress spokesperson. "Larry has the business experience, the knowledge, and the theological background to be an effective leader for our Canadian operation as we support current customers and begin significant expansion."



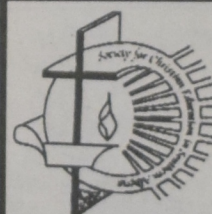
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## Church

## New Spanish Bible translation takes Hispanic church by storm

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (EP) – The International Bible Society (IBS) reports that its new Spanish translation of the Bible, the Nueva Version Internacional (NVI) has sold more than one million copies in the U.S. and Latin America in less than a year. Spanish is the third most-spoken language in the world today, after Chinese and English.

The U.S. has the fifth-largest Spanish-speaking population. The total population of the U.S. includes nearly 30 million Hispanics, of whom nearly half are bilingual in Spanish and English

(20 per cent of those are evangelicals).

The Bible society reports that NVI translators faithfully used the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Scripture texts as the basis for their work. While translating Scriptures into easy-to-understand Spanish for contemporary readers, they attempted to maintain the dignity and beauty of language expressed in the original texts.

The acceptance of the NVI by Spanish-speaking churches has been overwhelming, says Dr. Luciano Jaramillo, director of IBS-U.S. Hispanic Ministries in

Miami, and executive secretary of the Spanish Committee on Bible Translation.

"Many Spanish-speaking churches are adopting the NVI as their official Bible. We are convinced it will become the indispensable Bible for this and future generations," Jaramillo reported. "It is our prayer that God will use this version for the wonderful task of evangelism and the strengthening of his church, just as he has been doing over the centuries with other glorious Bible versions."

### 'We've been waiting'

Dean Merrill, vice president for IBS-U.S. Publishing, reported that "the NVI activity this first year has soared beyond our greatest expectations. We had no idea that so

many pastors, church members and evangelistic organizations would embrace it so readily, both in the U.S. and throughout Latin America. Everywhere we go, we hear people saying, 'We've been waiting for this Bible to finally come!'"

Galo Vasquez, executive director for IBS-Latin America, is very encouraged by the high degree of interest expressed this year for the NVI by pastors and leaders throughout Latin America. "Latin America is very serious and quite conservative when it comes to matters involving God's Word," he explained. "They revere it. It is not something to change. Yet they also realize the tremendous potential that a contemporary language Bible has for reaching the next

generation for Christ."

IBS, the copyright holder of the NVI, offers special prices for Scripture distribution by churches and missionaries active in evangelism and discipleship. It has also granted VIDA Publishers, a division of Zondervan, commercial rights to manage all mass commercial marketing of the NVI, including Christian retail bookstores and general outlets such as Wal-Mart.

After the initial launch ceremony releasing the NVI in 1999 in Los Angeles, other cities in the U.S. and Latin America held launching programs to introduce it to Spanish-speaking pastors, churches and communities, who are now presenting it to people through local Bible conferences.

## Chinese Catholic Church defies Pope

BEIJING, China (EP) – The government-controlled Catholic Church in China ordained five new bishops on January 6, defying papal authority and Catholic tradition. China and the Vatican have had no formal relations for over 50 years. The appointing ceremony, which took place on the traditional date of bishop ordination at the Vatican, further shows that the Chinese Church does not seek papal authority in affairs of hierarchy.

Vatican officials expressed surprise at the ordination and said the action would further strain relations between the Vatican and the communist Chinese government. They also mentioned that they would not seek relations unless the Chinese people were granted religious freedom. There are an estimated 12 million Catholics in China.

Foreign observers believe that more than half of that number worship in secret, rather than attend state-controlled churches. During the official Vatican ceremony on the same day, Pope John Paul II ordained clerics from Angola, Hungary, India, Italy, Poland, Romania and the U.S.

## Pope says all Christians bear responsibility for lack of unity

ROME (Religion Today) – The Pope pleaded for unity during a historic gathering of Christian leaders. More than 23 Protestant and Orthodox delegations, including those headed by Anglican Archbishop George Carey and Metropolitan Athanasios, who represented Orthodox Patriarch Bartolemos, gathered in St. Paul's Basilica on Jan. 18. It is thought to be the largest gathering of Christian leaders with a pope since the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, Reuters reported.

Pope John Paul II, Carey, and Athanasios opened the basilica's Holy Door, signifying the start of the Roman Catholic Jubilee year. The Pope has declared 2000 a year of special blessings.

"Perhaps we can leave this basilica shouting, 'Unity, unity,'" the Pope said. He said that all denominations should acknowledge their responsibility for disunity and look

for ways to reconcile.

"In this basilica, we ask forgiveness from Christ for every time in the history of the Church that his plan for unity was upset," John Paul said. "In this year of grace, there must grow in each of us the understanding of our personal responsibility for the fractures [in Christianity]."

## Jerusalem rabbis ban web surfing

JERUSALEM, Israel (EP) – A ban against Web surfing has been called for by Orthodox Jewish rabbis in Israel. The ruling appeared in Orthodox newspapers and was posted in Jewish neighborhoods. After an October meeting of rabbis, initiated by the influential Belz Hasidic sect of Judaism, the lead-

ers agreed that because the Internet was riddled with pornography and other obscene material, access to such computer media should be banned. The decision could effect more than 500,000 people living in Israel who follow Orthodox rabbinical decrees.

## Nuns conduct their own Jericho siege

JERICHO, Israel (Religion Today) – There is a siege going on at Jericho. Two American nuns are refusing to leave their monastery in the ancient city, even though Palestinian police have raided the facility, expelling several priests and nuns, the Associated Press said. "I just held tight to the bars of the chapel window, and right in front of me was a crucifix with Christ and that gave me strength,"

Maria Stephanopolous, sister of former Clinton adviser George Stephanopolous, said.

The police have allowed a doctor to see the nuns and are bringing them food, while Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat seeks a diplomatic solution. The monastery has been controlled by the exiled Russian Orthodox Church, also known as the White Russian Orthodox Church.

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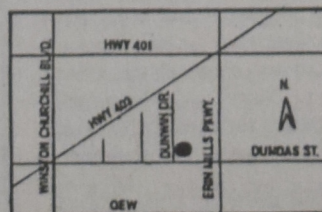
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## Church

# Modern search techniques discover remote tribes in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Indonesia (EP) — After years of aerial searching and charting tropical forest, Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) reports the discovery of a tribal group that has yet to have contact outside its own people.

In 1993, the 55-year-old MAF organization began charting 14 areas in the province of Irian Jaya, Indonesia, a region believed to be home to stone-age tribes not yet reached by modern civilization.

Located north of Australia, Irian Jaya's vast coastal swamps give rise to glacier covered peaks that form a spine through the

center of the island. More than 75 per cent of the land is covered by dense tropical forests, some of the wildest and most impenetrable jungles in the world.

## Mixture of new and old

"There are many places in Irian Jaya that still have no word of the gospel," reports Perry Pust, director of MAF's specialized ministries outreach on the island. "We chose 14 areas as the ones where we can be the most help through aviation and radio communication to reach the remote, stone-age people."

MAF's survey work to locate places likely to be inhabited by unreached groups is usually conducted from small fixed-wing, single-engine airplanes. Using a camera and a GPS (global positioning system) device, photos record not only a roof of a hut or some other sign of human presence, but also the satellite coordinates to plot the location of a map on the area.

The next step is often to return by helicopter to the general vicinity and hike to the location in an attempt to make contact. It is not unusual for a team to travel for five

weeks to get in and out of one of these remote areas.

## No life as 'noble savages'

Upon their return, these teams report these newly discovered people, most of whom have turned out to be animists of some kind.

One recently discovered tribal group lives in caves. Tribal members cake their bodies from head to foot with a clay mixture and spend much of their time talking to the trees and animals. "They would rather talk with the animals than to strangers," reported one church worker.

Health conditions in the jungles are very poor. In the swampland areas, people suffer from fungal diseases, boils, malaria, typhoid, diphtheria, ulcerated sores and leprosy. MAF missionaries report they wear only essential coverings made from plants.

The recent groups approached by MAF live simply. Cooking is performed using stones heated in a fire, then placed in bark pots filled with river water and greens.

Dwellings used by these tribes are made with either thatched roofs or folded banana or coconut palm leaves. Though some groups sleep directly on the ground, most huts have low platforms made from sticks and poles. Some groups even build houses high in the trees as protection from enemies.

The discovered people have approached visiting missionaries with a mixture of curiosity and

caution. "We have found in most cases the people are willing to receive help and are open to listen to the gospel," says Pust. One isolated group recently sent the following message through a daisy-chain of four translators, "We wish for peace. Our area is full of hardness. Our life is horrible. We need help. We want help. We don't want to wait long."

## Documenting the contact

During the stay of one evangelistic team, 20 people from a group of about 65 decided to follow Christ as their Savior.

"We know that we cannot see this Jesus," said the tribal chief when questioned if he understood his decision. "But we know he is here and he lives in our hearts. These hands of mine have killed many people," he continued. "We war all the time. This is sin, and we want to follow Jesus."

More than 130 national evangelists currently work in more than 70 remote villages. In addition to flight services, MAF assists through installing CB radios so remote areas can be in contact with the world outside.

In January MAF sent a film crew to document the search and discovery effort. The crew will visit recently contacted people and document the hardships and challenges of the undertaking to find the last of the uncontacted people. The completed production is planned for release this spring.

## Jesus, I am resting

*"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul."*

Psalm 23: 1-3a

Last Advent I preached a series on "The Gospel of Rest." I focused on various aspects of the gospel revealed in the Christmas story which remind us that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of rest, a gospel which tells us that grace is ours and we need not work for it.

The series was well-received, but what really pulled the worship services together was a song I had heard at a Steve Green concert. Steve Green is a Christian singer who has been making music for many years.

At his concert, Green led the audience in singing a song called "Jesus, I am Resting, Resting." I immediately liked the song, and e-mailed Steve Green Ministries for information. They put me in touch with a church in Tennessee whose music ensemble had recorded the song on a CD and had published the music for it as well. A few clicks of the computer mouse and a week's wait later, and I had CD and score in hand.

Our worship ensemble learned the song, and we had a soloist sing it during the first week in Advent to introduce it to the congregation. During the subsequent Advent Sundays we added other instruments, different voices and had the congregation sing the refrain.

## An unexpected source

Through all of this, I thought that the song we were singing was a new one, a recent addition to the world of Christian music. It wasn't until after Advent and Christmas had passed that a fellow staff member handed me a page copied from a devotional book of hymn stories.

I learned there that this song, which was now set for piano, guitars, soprano sax and alto vocal solo was a hymn written in 1876!

Jean Sophia Pigott (1845-1882) had written the text and James Mountain (1844-1933), an English Baptist minister had set the text to music. The tune had been re-worked by the Tennessee church, and we re-worked the text to remove its "King James" sound. But in essence the song is the same. Here are the original words by Pigott:

*Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art;*

## Chapter & Verse

Mary Hulst-Antonides



*I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart.  
Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, and Thy beauty  
fills my soul,  
for by Thy transforming power Thou hast made me  
whole.*

*Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus, I behold Thee as  
Thou art,  
and Thy love, so pure, so changeless satisfies my  
heart—  
Satisfies its deepest longings, meets, supplies its  
ev'ry need,  
Compasseth me round with blessings. This is love  
indeed!*

*Ever lift Thy face upon me as I work and wait for  
Thee.  
Resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus, earth's dark  
shadows flee.  
Brightness of my Father's glory, sunshine of my  
Father's face,  
Keep me ever trusting, resting; fill me with Thy  
grace.*

In reflecting on how this song touched my congregation, and thinking about how it has been sung for over a century, I realized that in this little discovery the original truth of the song is found.

We rest as Christians not because all is well. All is not well. We can rest as Christians because we know that our God is in control. We can rest because we know that the God who moved Jean Sophia Pigott to pen these words years ago, the God who stirred up a tune in the heart of James Mountain, the God who allowed me to take this

song and teach it to others—this God continues to move, to work and to lead us all into rest. *Keep me ever trusting, resting; fill me with Thy grace.*



Rev. Mary S. Hulst Antonides is pastor of Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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## The 'self-serving bias': A virtuous vice

According to my psychology textbook, every person who is not currently suffering from depression has what is known as a "self-serving bias." This pervasive characteristic accounts for some common human behaviors and rationales. Simply explained, the self-serving bias is our love of self in action. It is the lens through which we consistently see ourselves favorably, especially when we have done something we would view negatively in others.

While reading of this widespread tendency I found myself smugly agreeing with the descriptions of other people. It was not only fun, but remarkably easy to call to mind examples of individuals who had reacted precisely as outlined in the book. It is true, I concluded. The self-serving bias is alive and well in our society as a whole.

But my pious train of thought came to a screeching halt as I realized that "society as a whole" includes me. I, too, cultivate habits in line with the self-serving bias.

For instance, modern psychology believes that people more readily accept responsibility for good deeds than for bad, and for successes than for failures. If something goes well, it's because I trained for it or prepared well. If it flops, it's due to circumstances beyond my control.

This kind of thinking accounts for people who explain accidents with stories such as: "All of a sudden a hedge sprang up from nowhere and blinded me." Or: "The pedestrian hit me and went under my car." Reasoning like this prompts us to ask *Why me, Lord?* mostly with respect to our burdens rather than our blessings.

### I've got no problems!

Recent surveys indicate that most people perceive themselves as somewhat smarter than their peers, as well as more conscientious, principled and reliable. What is a fine quality in me is a fault in another. I am industrious; he is a workaholic.

We also justify ourselves by situations, while judging others by personality traits. I give up because of unbearable pressure; she caves in because of character weaknesses. We are quite capable of putting others down in order to elevate ourselves.

## Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

Our natural inclination is to seek images or descriptions which flatter us. Knowing this egotistical tendency, some people use it to manipulate others. It's called the "Barnum Effect," so named after showman P.T. Barnum's reported credo: "There's a sucker born every minute." The idea is to stroke a person's ego, establishing yourself as an obviously intelligent and discerning judge of character. It has worked especially well for psychics and astrologers over the centuries.

On the other hand, humanist philosophers will tell you that people's problems most often stem from low self-esteem. They would lead you to believe that a wide range of factors contribute to poor self-image, resulting in devastating problems. And clearly, we do need to be generally accepting of ourselves in order to enjoy some degree of contentment. However, it seems to me almost a biblical assumption that we will like ourselves well enough. Consider the admonition to love one another as we love ourselves.

### Who can stand before God?

The whole concept has put a new spin on my approach to Communion. After all, how do I even stand a chance at honest self-examination if I need a self-serving bias just to function normally?

The answer must lie somewhere between the pitfalls of self-righteousness and the necessity of a healthy self-esteem. It strikes me that such a balance can only come from the realization of my desperate need for a Savior. I must be willing to see that if my virtues were weighed against my vices I would be found lacking, and furthermore, that it wasn't any easier for Christ to have paid for my sins than the sins of others.

So when all is said and done, I think I'm making progress in my quest for sober self-assessment. At least more progress than most people!



*Heidi VanDerSlikke is a freelance writer who lives in Harriston, Ont.*

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## The return to virtue

## Pursuing virtue

Laura Smit

In his book *The Abolition of Man*, written in 1947, C. S. Lewis talks about his age as being characterized by people "without chests," people who try to define themselves only as minds and passions, while eliminating any reference to the central character, the heart-based self, which classical understandings of human nature suggest should unify the mind and the passions. Lewis says:

*The head rules the belly through the chest – the seat ... of Magnanimity, of emotion organized by trained habit into stable sentiments.... It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal [p. 34].*

If this understanding of character was being devalued when Lewis was writing in 1947, how much more is it under attack today. Our age of tolerance and open-mindedness has tried to eliminate the function within us of discrimination and self-control, the place where emotion is "organized by trained habit into stable sentiments."

This habitual training of the emotions and of the inner life, such that the self finds a coherence and purpose which makes it possible to control the actions of both mind and body, is what earlier ages meant by *virtue*.

## A foundation of prudence

It is probably because Lewis' diagnosis remains so correct in terms of society at large that talk about virtue is increasingly popular. The disparaging of virtue and the dismissal of character has finally reached such an extreme that it is provoking a reaction. It is increasingly common to find school systems – even public school systems – talking about instilling virtues and building character in their students. Popular pundits such as William Bennett and Steven Carter write about virtue and character. The ancient and medieval Christian understanding of virtue is being rediscovered and popularized – especially within the Catholic tradition, but by many Protestants as well.

That traditional Christian understanding identifies seven particular virtues which must be cultivated in order to be a virtuous person: the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues.

The theological virtues, which are distinctly Christian, are faith, hope and – most importantly – love. The cardinal virtues – which,



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C.S. Lewis: "It is probably because Lewis' diagnosis remains so correct in terms of society at large that talk about virtue is increasingly popular."

thanks to common grace, appear in both non-Christians and Christians, though they may be perfected only through the power of Christ – are justice, fortitude, temperance, and – most importantly – prudence.

Prudence doesn't mean self-protection, as we often use the word today. Rather prudence refers to our ability to see the world rightly and squarely, to see things from God's viewpoint, as they really are, without self-deception and without being deceived by the Evil One. Prudence also requires acting on the basis of this clear vision. Lewis is talking about prudence and its abandonment when he says:

*For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline and virtue. For ... applied science [which Lewis takes to be the dominant ideology of our age] the problem is how to subdue reality to [our] wishes.... [Abolition, p.88]*

In this same vein, Iris Murdoch speaks of virtue in terms of paying close, loving attention to the world around us and, by means of such attention, seeing reality rightly. The other virtues are built on this foundation of prudence, since without a truthful understanding of reality we can not act rightly, nor can we order our inner life correctly.

## Comfortably 'totally depraved'

In all this talk of virtue, the Reformed tradition has often been strangely silent. Calvin himself wrote a lot about personal righteousness, yet somehow this has

not been an emphasis in large portions of the Reformed tradition. I suspect that one reason for this is a distorted understanding of depravity.

Many Reformed and Presbyterian Christians of my acquaintance are comfortably convinced that they are totally depraved, even though the doctrine of total depravity is meant to describe our life apart from the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. No genuinely Christian person is totally depraved. Even though the old self has not yet completely died away, the new self is in the process of coming to life, and with that new self comes the ability to reflect the image of Christ. "We are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

This is meant to be a present reality for Christian people, not just a future promise. However, many well-meaning Reformed Christians remain convinced that even in this new, transformed life virtue is impossible and that all our best efforts to be virtuous remain but "filthy rags."

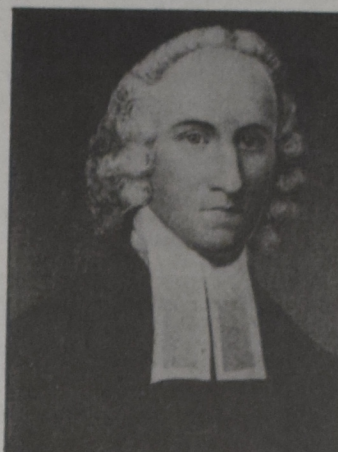
## Internal motivation needed

In addition, of course, Reformed Christians have always been suspicious of anything which smacks of "works righteousness" or "perfectionism." A systematic program of spiritual discipline leading to personal transformation sounds to some Reformed ears like an attempt to work our way to heaven.

Since good works are supposed to be the result of gratitude there is often an assumption that they should be more spontaneous than disciplined. But in the best of the Reformed tradition, inner transformation is understood as a sign of grace. John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards often write about the disciplined life of righteousness as evidence of grace. Edwards says:

*Godliness in the heart has as direct a relation to practice as a fountain has to a stream, or as the luminous nature of the sun has to beams sent forth, or as life has to breathing, or the beating of the pulse, or any other vital act; or as a habit or principle of action has to action for 'tis the very nature and notion of grace, that 'tis a principle of holy action or practice.*

When grace touches our lives, it naturally changes our inner nature, making us people who experience godliness within and practice holiness without. When grace is allowed to work, it will



PUNK &amp; WAGNALLS NEW ENCYCLOPEDIA

Jonathan Edwards often wrote about the disciplined life of righteousness as evidence of grace.

make us virtuous people.

The Reformed emphasis on the sovereignty of God has led many of us to speak of ethics in terms of obedience rather than in terms of a transformed nature. The picture is more often one of doing as we're told without questioning, rather than one of becoming people who learn to love and desire the same things that God desires.

In the first picture, the motivation for our actions is external – the command of God. In the second picture, the motivation has been internalized, for our natures have been renewed into God's image so that we now share his will and desire what He desires. Surely this should be the goal of Christian living.

Think of how good parents train their children in good behavior. When a two-year-old is sitting in a shopping cart in the grocery-store checkout line and pockets candy off the temptingly available rack, she will put it back because her parents tell her to do so. But as she grows older, her parents hope that she will come to share the value of honesty, that she will mature to the

point that she will not steal candy even when her parents are not present because she has become not just honest out of obedience but an honest person.

## Sharing our Father's values

So, too, when we are transformed into the likeness of Christ. As we grow into our role as God's children, we come to share our Father's values. In speaking of this transformation Paul says, "Thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18). Becoming "obedient from the heart" so that we are "slaves of righteousness" means that we have become people whose very nature is now dishonored when we sin.

The tradition of discussing the Christian life in terms of virtue can be helpful to us as we attempt to resist our culture's drift into subjective self-indulgence. The pursuit of virtue gives us a centre which then empowers our participation in the transforming work of the Kingdom.

In Lewis' words, we become people "with chests," people whose inner nature has been renewed into the likeness of Christ. This is what it means to grow as children of God.

Dr. Laura Smit teaches theology at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and a former Christian Courier columnist.



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## The return to virtue

## Can we recover our virtue?

## Harry der Nederlanden

Every culture or civilization has at its heart a constellation of virtues that it cultivates and values in its people and that it seeks to instill in its children. These reflect the qualities, the strengths and abilities that a society recognizes as basic to its survival and its continued identity.

Virtue. This comes from a sense of loss. Parents have been troubled by the bad behavior of their children, their lack of respect for all authority, for private property, for one another, and by their bad manners. The shootings and other violence in schools have brought this long-festering concern to a head. "How have we lost those attitudes

of adulation and imitation.

Christian parents share this concern. They are concerned not just about their own children, but about all the children. Besides, the child is all too soon an adult. We are haunted by the spectre of a free, prosperous society threatened by the loss of those virtues that have made us strong. We fear a break-

the other hand, tends to discuss how rules ought to be applied in murky or borderline situations. The traditional approach includes topics such as divorce, sexual behavior outside of marriage, war, abortion, euthanasia, the environment and so on. It analyses complex situations in terms of the biblical norms and gives guidance on what is right, that is, how to live in accordance with God's will.

## Virtue vs. the commandments

This approach seems more intellectualistic than the virtues approach. Isn't it more important to nurture the habit of generosity than to debate whether tithing applies to the New Testament era? Isn't it better to instill attitudes of respect, compassion and optimism than to preach "Thou shalt"? You bet!

The contrast is dangerous, however. Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with the language of law; in fact, the word "testament" is related to law and covenant. The idea of law gives prominence to God's Word. Leading a good or righteous life is, then, pictured as a response to God's initiative: he addressed us first. And that Word became flesh in Christ Jesus.

Why did the Word have to become incarnate in the Son of God? Because no matter what clever methods we devise, we cannot successfully embody that word or model God's righteousness and holiness.

We must also remind ourselves that the Reformed stress on law never forgot that its purpose was not just to demand outward conformity to a rule but to teach us how to love.

The law is a schoolmaster to Christ, who embodies that love. The Bible prompts us to see religion and morality together: serving God and being good are bound together in the love commandment.

To lead a virtuous life is not first of all to fashion and mold ourselves according to some high ideal; we confess that from beginning to end it is the work of Christ who lives in us by his Spirit.

This doesn't take away from our work, our mandate to cultivate ourselves as well as the soil.

When Paul writes, "... Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose," he is not talking of salvation in a narrow sense but of God's presence in the totality of our lives. His working does not cancel out our duty to

work, but grounds it and enables it.

There are good and valid reasons why the Reformation avoided the language of the virtues. It is at home in the city or state; virtues are valued and recognized by the community as a whole. The virtuous person embodies those qualities on which the community or state is founded, and it relies on them for its continued existence.

This part-whole harmony is at odds with the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount. The ethic of virtue focuses your eye on the hero, on the prominent, admirable public figure. The Sermon on the Mount focuses on the poor (in spirit), the weak, the persecuted. It speaks of suffering and of dying unto self and unto the values of the world.

Thomas Aquinas, the great Catholic theologian, adopted the language of virtue from classical paganism and sought to transform it. No one can deny that he did so with some success. It served the church for hundreds of years, but not without problems.

It divided the Christian life into the ordinary and the extraordinary, the natural and the supernatural. Can the language of virtue be freed from this tendency to divide the work of redemption and renewal 50-50 between us and God?

## Risky undertaking

I don't know. Rethinking such matters is a risky undertaking. Different traditions of thinking come together and clash. What we had once thought to be clear turns muddy. People misunderstand one another. Old, cherished ways of speaking and acting are challenged.

All this is a picture of the moral life itself. This is what happened during the Reformation. One can see such times as periods of wandering and uncertainty. Or one can see them as periods when the Spirit of God is working to renew us so that we may be more effective witnesses to the work he has begun in us and through us as he raises new signs of his coming Kingdom.

To talk together about new and better ways to walk together itself requires such virtues as mutual trust, patience, charity, discernment, commitment and hope. We cannot recognize and acquire virtue unless we already have it.

This isn't a silly paradox. It's at the heart of the biblical teaching that the essence of our humanity is neither something we possess by nature nor something we can create: it is a gift from God given to us in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.



*Prairie Scene: Mirage (1837), a water color by Alfred Jacob Miller*

*"When the American continent began to be settled by Europeans, those on the so-called frontier required a unique combination of virtues that were celebrated in stories and films as the source of the American character. Here obedience and humility were less desirable than independence and boldness and initiative."*

During the Middle Ages, for example, when peace and prosperity depended upon the ability of each lord to mobilize a number of fighting men, it was important to cultivate martial virtues in the boys of the ruling class. The most important virtues for the peasant farmer, on the other hand, were loyalty, obedience, humility and industry.

When the American continent began to be settled by Europeans, those on the so-called frontier required a unique combination of virtues that were celebrated in stories and films as the source of the American character. Here obedience and humility were less desirable than independence and boldness and initiative.

Nowadays on talk shows you will often hear of the necessity of men to get rid of that cluster of qualities called "machismo" and to nurture their feminine side. Even when the word "virtue" isn't used, whenever we talk about the character of people, a favorite pastime in any culture, we do so on the basis of some ideal, some contrast between desirable and undesirable, good and bad traits.

We are now in the middle of a revival of interest in virtue—in virtue itself as well as in the idea of

and habits that we once took for granted?" parents, educators and leaders are asking.

This is by no means an entirely new discussion. Cultural critics have long worried about our concentration on science and technology, business and industry, and our relative neglect of the values of the humanities. With the banishment of Christianity from public education and the attack on traditional values as middle-class, racist and sexist, many voices have been raised lamenting the loss of virtue in our society. What has happened to civility and integrity?

This moral critique has been extended to the media, computer games and the Internet. Even the arts have not escaped. Not only are these all failing us by neglecting to hold up for admiration and imitation those character traits we value, they also fail us by actively promoting violence or by inuring us to violence.

## The virtues of virtue

This drama of lost virtue extends also to public figures, from politicians to basketball players. They've been failing our children miserably by being mere mortals rather than heroes of virtue worthy

down of order, a barbarian invasion comprised of our own offspring.

Every ethical code, like the Ten Commandments, is rooted in some religious tradition. In a pluralistic society this raises huge obstacles against the adoption of such a code for public schools or for the public square.

To speak of the need for instilling virtues like honesty, generosity, patience, kindness, responsibility, self-control, courage, diligence raises fewer red flags than to argue for enshrining the Ten Commandments as our common standard.

One of the arguments put forward in favor of approaching morality in terms of acquiring virtues rather than in terms of obeying laws is that virtue can be treated as something internal, as something we possess and can therefore nurture and develop.

Virtues can be modeled, taught, rewarded. Our Sept. 20, 1999, issue pointed out that now some virtues can even be measured as emotional intelligence: the E.Q. test is designed to measure such traits as self-restraint, optimism, assertiveness and self-confidence.

Traditional Protestant ethics, on



## The return to virtue

# A VIRTUOUS TREND: Virtue as a hot commodity in popular culture

Marian Van Til

Every culture has a certain set of values it wants to pass on to its children, as Harry der Nederlanden points out in the previous article (opposite). But many people sense that our culture has lost its way in that regard. And it's one thing for philosophers, theologians and ethicists to discuss virtue, but another for a society morally adrift to long for and seem to embrace the "old-fashioned" values associated with virtue.

While for some time there has been talk about returning to "family values," about five years ago a return-to-virtue mushroomed into a trend, given great impetus by the widely read *Book of Virtues* edited by William Bennett (more of him later).

Internet web searches are quick to reveal many trends these days, and I wondered what evidence the web would reveal of this one. It's not uncommon for website owners to lure people to their sites by using search words with particular associations that have little, if anything, to do with the website. Thus, plugging "virtue" into a search engine yields some bizarre results (including a young woman who obviously adopted "Virtue" as a surname, as a particular sort of come-on).

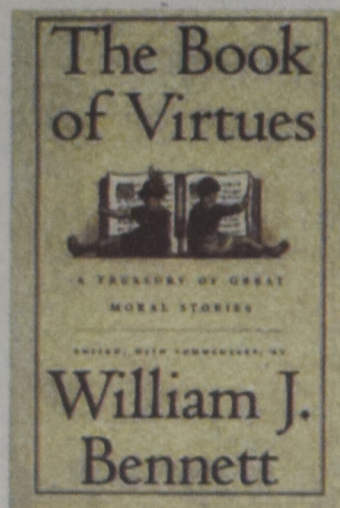
The very fact the word "virtue" is deemed to be a word which will catch people (rather than repel them, because, after all, "virtue" is boring, isn't it?) says that the virtue trend is real.



A "Saint of Virtue" wears the Whole Armor of God.

There was such a site at the top of my search list (Epinions.com) which lets a person write reviews of products in a number of categories so that potential buyers can shop for such products or even go to movies armed with helpful and presumably unbiased information. This site is legitimately helpful, but it isn't about virtue, unless one stretches things fairly far.

I also found the Virtue and Vice Body Piercing shop (which offers "timeless" tattoos as well as



piercings). I of course wanted to see what a virtuous piercing might look like, but the site is short on examples.

Then there's a company called Virtue-Tech, which is geared to bring more traffic to your website if you will but engage them to do so. Clearly, such companies are trading on the current allure that virtue seems to have, but are doing so in a not-so-virtuous manner to make a buck.

## Imitating God?

More to the point – but not really demonstrating or explaining the current fascination with virtue – were the inevitable dictionary and encyclopedia definitions and articles, for example, those from the *Stanford* (University) *Encyclopedia* and the *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

It is helpful to know that in church tradition there are considered to be seven virtues: four "cardinal" or social virtues (which virtues Thomas Aquinas termed *politicae*) – prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice – and three "theological" virtues – charity (love), faith, hope.

Thomas and other medieval theologians wrote at length about the nature of each of the virtues and their relation to the life of the Christian. Aquinas summed it up: "Virtue consists in the following, or imitation, of God. Every virtue, like every other thing, has its type [exemplar] in God" (*Summa Theologica*, I-II:61:4).

That's not to say that the current trend indicates that people are ready to drop self-interest and follow God. But it does indicate that doubt about us being the "captain of our own soul" is rising, and a longing for a moral universe beyond one in which, as the book of Judges puts it, "everyone did

what was right in their own eyes."

Then I came across a site called "Saints of Virtue," which, though specifically Christian, more pointedly exemplifies the trend. "Saints of Virtue" is a Christian computer game which allows the players "to take an incredible [their emphasis] journey through the kingdom of the heart" ([www.saintsofvirtue.com](http://www.saintsofvirtue.com)).

## Battling dragons of vice

The player "must overcome many different enemies, including pride, fear, vanity and self-righteousness, while navigating an immense world full of traps, mazes, puzzles and surprises" – a kind of allegory of the Christian life (and all human life, for that matter).

One adult user's comments summarized his feelings about this particular example of the preoccupation with virtue: "Parents can finally be comfortable giving their kids something that combines sound biblical principles, excellent 3D graphics, a super sound track and fast-paced action."

More such games showed up, most of them secular in origin ("Forge of Virtue," for example). The longing for strongly delineated values easily translates into stories and games which concentrate on the seven virtues, especially as pitted against the vices (the seven deadly sins). Most of them take off on the medieval chivalric tradition, with you the player impersonating a virtuous knight combatting the forces of evil.

## The Book of Virtues

Then there's William Bennett's popularizing of "virtue." Bennett was the U.S. Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan, and later George Bush's "drug czar." In 1994 Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, subtitled: *A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* appeared. He collected and edited stories from the Bible, folklore and a number of the great writers of Western civilization, and wrote introductions to each. Unexpectedly, the book became a best-seller. Clearly Bennett touched a nerve. The need was, and is, a deep one, coming from our very core as beings created in God's image.

Bennett touched off a virtual virtue industry. A year after *The Book of Virtues* hit the scene, he came out with a sequel: *Moral Compass: Stories for Life's Journey*. Since then he has produced both a children's and a young people's *Book of Virtues*; a book

for parents about the values and knowledge an "educated" child should have; and several specifically American counterparts to his virtue books – "words of advice" in the form of stories, letters, poems and speeches from the U.S.'s founding fathers.

Bennett is still having impact beyond those who read his books. If a popular trend doesn't start with television it eventually makes it to television, where it reaches larger masses than even the Internet. A TV producer named Bruce Johnson (CEO of Porchlight Entertainment) discovered Bennett's book the year it came out. Unaware that it was on the best-seller list, he paged through it and immediately decided it would make a good animated series, he says. Johnson feels that the reason the book became so popular is Bennett's introduction to each story, in which he articulates the philosophy behind each story or theme.

## 'Adventures' with virtue

Johnson won a contract to produce a show which would be broadcast on public television in the U.S., and viewable in many parts of Canada as well (the show's website is at: [www.pbs.org/adventures/Treasure/default3.htm](http://www.pbs.org/adventures/Treasure/default3.htm)).

The program, called simply *Adventures from the Book of Virtues*, is a hit. Its characters are a girl (Annie Redfeather) and boy (Zach Nichols) and their four animal friends: a buffalo named Plato, a red-tailed hawk named Aurora, a prairie dog known as Aristotle and a bobcat called Socrates ("Sock" – an ironic allusion for adults to the Clinton Whitehouse via Socks the presidential cat, perhaps?).

Each adventure is unashamedly named for the particular virtue it promotes. So far there are episodes on trustworthiness, determination, integrity, gratitude, selflessness, moderation, wisdom; and repeating episodes on honesty, work, responsibility, compassion, courage, self-discipline, friendship, loyalty, respect, faith, humility, generosity, perseverance. Sounds like a veritable list of fruits of the Spirit!

There is more evidence of the trend in other books being produced, or rediscovered and republished. An example of the latter is an 1876 work called *The Royal Path to Life* is "a century-old guide to life," says its blurb, containing "timeless values in its ... good old-fashioned advice." Wanting to associate itself with the popularity of Bennett's book, it advertises itself as a "book of virtues."



Characters from the TV show *Adventures from the Book of Virtues*: From top, Socrates ("Sock"), Plato, Aurora and Aristotle ("Ari").

There are doubtless other examples.

This emphasis on the virtues may be a fad, and thus may fade. But as someone has said: there's a God-sized hole in the human heart that yearns for filling. So the longing for Good, whatever the world calls it, will not disappear.



## The return to virtue

# What's all this about virtue?



A depiction of Prudence: one of the seven basic virtues.

## Robert Sweetman

Reformed Protestants have been less inclined than most Christians to account for a person's good works in terms of inner virtue. To say that someone possesses inner virtue seems to make goodness into a human achievement, something we do on our own steam. Human goodness, we say, is a sign of God's grace, common grace in the case of an unbeliever's goodness, sanctifying grace in the case of a believer. Reformed Protestants are famously reputed to confess their good works are "as filthy rags" — to God be the glory!

## Bending our spirits into shape

Despite these deep Reformed habits of mind and heart, there is today talk of the virtues. Those who have quick ears can catch the whisper of voices trying out new phrases that still sound strange on the tongue. Reformed Protestants are open in a new way to claims made for an ethics of virtue. Why? And what is such an ethics? Where in the Christian world does it come from? What promise and what

risks does it hold for us?

An ethics of virtue is a way of understanding the fact that all human beings often do the right thing, despite sin and unbelief. It does so by looking to the internal character of the human spirit. It might help to think of it this way: an ethics of virtue assumes that the human spirit has a certain shape (character). This shape is an achievement of concrete living. In other words, the pattern of our living bends and molds the spirit into one shape or another. Some of these shapes help a person to flourish or live rightly. Others work against such right living.

In this way of picturing the human spirit, it is not fluid like a liquid or a gas; that is, it is not restricted to taking the shapes its environment imposes on it. Rather, you must think of it as a malleable solid like gold. It can be shaped by hammering. So, too, the spirit can be changed; actions have consequences. But the spirit can also hold its shape.

In an ethics of virtue, this ability human spirits have of holding their shape is called *habit*. If a habit

helps the spirit to flourish or live rightly it is called virtue; if it disposes the spirit to do wrong it is called vice.

## Why we've got the right stuff

In an ethics of virtue there are many individual virtues. You might say there are as many different virtues as there are right or good kinds of action. But they can all be arranged into seven basic types: temperance or moderation, courage, justice, prudence (the knack some people have of knowing just the right thing to do in every circumstance), faith, hope and charity.

All of these virtues must be thought of as gifts of God, but their divine origin is most obvious in the case of faith, hope and charity. These virtues work to shape the spirit, its emotions, will, imagination, memory, and intellect, so that the human person possesses everything she needs to do her part in the world and so to flourish and achieve her destiny before God.

Right action forms virtue, and virtue tends the human person toward right action. This would be a vicious circle leading nowhere and explaining nothing if there weren't alongside a standard or law rooted in the very nature of the human person and as ancient as the Creation itself.

This law prescribes in a deep way what are right actions and, by implication, what are not. The Ten Commandments are at the core of this natural law. They are revealed in the Bible, but they are also deeply implanted in our marrow. They are revealed because they, like the Holy Spirit's sighs, are often too deep for words. And yet principles, much like the individual commandments, have been articulated in cultures all across the world and in many different times.

Together, virtue and natural law go far to explain how and why human beings do the right thing often enough to make communal and individual life viable through the long generations of human sorrow.

I teach about medieval philosophy — for a living, if you can believe it. So I drew these features of an ethics of virtue from the version developed by the medieval philosopher I know the best, Thomas Aquinas. Of course, his name gives you a big hint as to where in the Christian world virtue ethics comes from. Roman Catholic thinkers have been the most numerous and intellectually powerful proponents of this way of thinking about human deeds.

The question is then: Why are Reformed Protestants now open to this characteristically Catholic way of thinking and speaking? (A definitive answer demands a prophet's gifts. I am *not* a prophet, as my favorite summer T-shirt proclaims.)

Over the last 30 years, Protestant and Catholic Christians have made common cause on a number of social and political fronts. Many Christians in both camps have become increasingly worried about what they experience as a moral slide in North American society, and have mobilized against it. These practical alliances have been of many types and with respect to a rainbow of social and political issues, especially the "Right to Life" movement.

The multiple initiatives of the "family values" movement have also spurred grass-roots co-operation. On the other side of the social and political coin, Protestant and Catholic activists have spearheaded opposition to capital punishment. In Canada, anti-poverty initiatives and the Jubilee movement bring together many Catholic and Protestant activists, as do issues surrounding refugees.

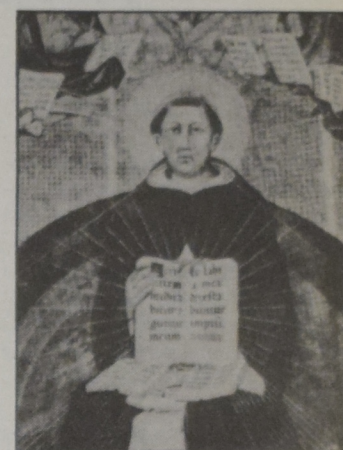
So Protestants and Catholics are making common cause on both sides of the Culture Wars, and in the process each has become familiar with the ethical and political language the other uses to state their shared case. Evangelical and Reformed Protestants are also part of this development, and thus have learned a new respect for Roman Catholic voices, and show a greater willingness to consider their ways of accounting for good and evil in the world.

## Promise and peril

We get an idea of both the promise and the peril of virtue ethics if we ask ourselves where Roman Catholic thinkers got the notion of virtue and why they found it attractive. I must be brief — as Calvin said, 800 pages into his *Institutes*!

Virtue ethics is not a Roman Catholic invention; it goes back to the pagan Greek philosophers. So why were ancient and medieval theologians so attracted by this way of talking about good and evil living?

Virtue is, as they understood it, a gift God gives so that we may live rightly. In fact, virtues tilt the playing field of life so that the gravitational force of our spirits weighs us down toward right living and good actions. Obviously, if you are given what you need to live



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## St. Thomas Aquinas

well before the Lord, if what you're given is *really* yours, then you can be held responsible for your failings and even for the warped shapes your spirit can assume. That is the great promise of virtue ethics, that is what made Thomas Aquinas' eyes shine when he read Aristotle.

## 'Works righteousness'

But is there a down side? Aristotle's understanding of being human, and hence of the role of virtues in human flourishing, indeed, his notion of what flourishing is, was not Christian. The sense of virtue as a gift given for a life of mutual service was foreign to him. The same is true of the terrible crack in the universe occasioned by sin; and, above all, of God's loving condescension to heal the crack (a pattern of action that could only have appeared vicious and unworthy to Aristotle had he but known).

Danger and risk, then, come to the Christian virtue ethicist in two ways. First, the sense of ownership of the virtues and the good works they enable can come to stand in opposition to their divine origin as gift. Human good acts can come to be opposed to God's acts as somehow ours and not his. These good actions are what *we* bring and contribute to our salvation.

Virtue ethics may encourage what Protestants have always called "works righteousness." This bit of amnesia can and does happen. It is made easier whenever God's gifts and the human living they motivate are too sharply differentiated into opposing categories. These are the virtues that *belong* to me because I am human; those are given to me only if I am a Christian. As if the first category of virtues were not just as given, and hence to be credited to God.

Continued on page 15...

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## The return to virtue

Letter from Europe

# The Virtuous Life – and the livin' ain't easy

Jay Reay

I'm a man of easy virtue. Please don't cover your cat's eyes to protect her morals or cancel your subscription to *Christian Courier* in protest. I don't mean that I am debauched or riddled with vice (I may be, of course; but if so, I successfully keep that secret from myself). I mean to say that I am happy to follow the virtuous life – when it's not too hard.

Virtue is not just the absence of vice. If that were the case, sheer laziness alone would make me a paragon of virtue. But if sinning requires the finagling of a Machiavelli, the application of physical energy and commitment, being virtuous demands positively Herculean strength of mind and body.

We know where we are with sin. The seven "deadly" sins are a concept outside the Reformed tradition, but you will be familiar with them; not – unlike me (as you may recall from previous articles here) – from personal experience, but from scriptural reference and popular usage. They are pretty clear: Pride, Greed, Envy, Anger, Lust, Gluttony and my old friend Sloth. We know where we are with them and can pick-'n'-mix 'em to our heart's content.

### A rose by any other name...

The virtues require work just to understand what we are talking about. Other than St Paul's listing



of the fruit of the Spirit, there is no simple statement in the Bible of what constitutes "virtue." Christian writers use different nouns, not even agreeing amongst themselves as to what they mean.

The four cardinal – or pivotal – virtues, and the three theological virtues are given different names by commentators and religious leaders, and while roses still smell sweet by any other name, words should have precise meanings for good communication.

Different nouns confuse the non-specialist and deter us from

seeking more knowledge about them. C. S. Lewis listed the virtues as Prudence, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude, and Faith, Hope and Charity. Other commentators list them (in the same order) as Humility, Self-control, Generosity, Zeal, Faith, Kindness and Love. All but one of these nouns are different, and their meanings are too. So what are we to make of that?

You might think that I am playing the pedant to excuse my own lack of zeal in pursuit of a virtuous life. You may well be right. But if I can't find a consistent description

of what I am supposed to be seeking after, what hope do I have of ever finding it?

### The 'beauty' of abstinence

Using Lewis's nomenclature, let's look at a few of these virtues and see how attractive they are.

Prudence means being careful. Good stewardship is implied; good judgement is required. My whole adult life has been a series of risks, some paying off, most not; and even at an age now where prudence should be second-nature, I take little heed of good advice and sound common sense. Life would be very dull indeed without the spice of testing myself every day, going out on a limb to reach for the stars.

Take Temperance – please do, I've no use for it. Often referring just to a ban on alcohol, temperance applies to all appetites. This is plain common sense and any competent medical practitioner would recommend moderation in all things for our well-being.

But many Christian writers have demanded total abstinence from anything which gives pleasure. As a result, complete avoidance of alcoholic drink and other stimulants – including coffee and tea – is regarded by many sects as a virtue to be attained. More controversially, sex is viewed in the same light, and a pretty dim light it is too.

Fortitude in the Christian context requires that we must bear witness to our faith, no matter what the humiliation or danger. In times past this could be a real test. In the amphitheatre, facing a lion with halitosis, or becoming a rather too well-done steak at the stake was

not an uncommon fate for the Christian. We have it much easier now, in most countries anyway.

In dealing with life's other slings and arrows, fortitude shows real strength of character. It's the "dust yourself off and start all over again" attribute. In my book, that's not a virtue, it's an essential bit of the backbone without which life would be impossible. No credit there, then.

We can see from these examples that being really virtuous is hard. Perhaps now you can sympathize with my desire to follow an easier route, even though you yourself are diligent in taking the harder path.

Or are you?

### Just add water

Try this short test to see if you, like me, are a person who takes his or her virtues watered down.

You know you are a person of easy virtue when...

- Prudence means never taking a risk with your own money that you wouldn't first take with another's.

- Temperance means temporary abstinence from all things which make your back hurt and your eyes water.

- Justice is winning your lawsuit on a technicality when you were at fault in the first place.

- Fortitude is what gets you through the day at the office, sustained only by gossip, coffee and complaining about the boss.

- Faith means hedging your bets, following E.Y. Harburg's dictum: *No matter how I probe and prod / I cannot quite believe in God. / But oh! I hope to God that he / Unswervingly believes in me!*

- Hope isn't the certainty of entering God's Kingdom, it's what makes you buy a lottery ticket.

- Charity doesn't mean demonstrating understanding, empathy, fair-mindedness or unquestioning love; it means we are upright people of virtue just because we once stuffed a five dollar bill in the hand of some poor indigent on the street whom we wouldn't invite into our houses on a cold night.

## What's all this about virtue?

... continued from page 14

Second, pagan understandings of human virtue can hang about Christian virtue theories, muting their Christian voice. Pagan Greek notions of virtue and human flourishing stressed human self-sufficiency, a god-like autonomy and the exercise of power over others. Mutuality, servant leadership, empowering others and the like had no place in such understandings of a flourishing human life.

Thus, those Christian ethics of virtue which are developed in too close a proximity to the spirit of their ancient and pagan archetypes are bound to have difficulty in doing justice to truly Christian living. Such problems are easy to come by in the long history of Christian ethical theory, but even more so in the behavior of Christian people, in our incessant striving for self-sufficiency, for autonomy and for power over others.

With such risks, why should

Reformed Protestants be open to virtue ethics? For two reasons. First, we want to be able to understand our Roman Catholic fellow Christians whenever they speak to us and the world about right and wrong, healthy and unhealthy patterns of living and acting. That is integral to the communion of saints that we confess, and it involves, above all, Protestant Christians' catching the Christian concerns underlying Roman Catholic characteristic patterns of thought and speech.

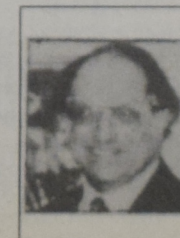
Second, virtue ethics represents a healthy challenge to the Calvinistic understanding of human responsibility and sin. Why? Because it challenges us to find better ways to understand our ability to act rightly despite sin, and even despite radical unbelief – beyond the stereotypical "If I do good it's God acting, if I do evil it's me."

If the only actions we owe to

ourselves are evil, how can we sustain the claim that we are responsible for actually obeying God's commands, that is, for doing what is right and good?

But we who are Reformed, like our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, confess that God made and redeemed us well, that he gives us all that we need to live for him, and that "total depravity" itself is powerless to change those things. Now that is something worth thinking about.

Robert Sweetman is a historian of medieval philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto. In describing his own virtue, Sweetman says: "Give me a fence to sit on. I'll mistake it for a La-Z-Boy every time."



Jay Reay is a member of the Church of England. He is knowledge management consultant who lives the easy life near Oxford, England.



## Comment

# Traditional weddings reflect sexism, materialism, self-absorption

*Dear Elizabeth,*

This past summer my family and I flew out to a wedding. We had a great time, from the rehearsal, to the service, to the reception afterwards. Four days of music, laughter, dance and good food can change your waist-size, if not your worldview, and when the weekend finished we were all a little sad to go home.

But I have to admit something. Simply put, I couldn't see myself marrying in a traditional wedding. While I don't harbor militant feelings against it, I believe certain things about the traditional wedding could be altered to make the wedding celebration better than it already is.

It doesn't take an anthropologist to know what I'm getting at: the bride is figuratively given away, female virginity is alluded to while simultaneously highlighted, and male "virtue" is effectively ignored. To top it off, the church acts as the governing body, even though it's the state which unites people in marriage.

Am I being a party-poopster here, Elizabeth? I don't think I am, but before I continue I should get your take on the issue.

✉ ✉ ✉

*Dirk*

*Hi Dirk,*

Oh, I agree wholeheartedly. In fact, I've been biting my lip the past year while a co-worker has been planning her wedding; I've been trying to hold back how silly I think it all is. The matching dresses, the tuxedos, a huge reception at a golf course overlooking the ocean, her hunt for just the right church building to rent, the honeymoon cruise.... I could go on, but you get the idea.

The last straw for me was just this week (now months after the wedding) when she showed me the beautifully pressed and framed flower arrangement that was her bouquet. It looks wonderful, but she isn't happy with it because the arranger removed some flowers before pressing, so it's not exactly like the original!

It all seems like way too much organizing and preparation for just one day. After all that, how can the daily routine of marriage not be a letdown?

But at the same time, I wonder whether I react too extremely in wanting to throw away all that "stuff." There is value in tradition and ceremony because it acknowledges events of significance in people's lives. A lot of the wedding traditions, as you pointed out, are archaic and don't reflect the true equal nature of men and women, but the flip side is by getting rid of all those trappings we've thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

Marriage is a holy union between two people, and sometimes taking the pomp and circumstance away removes the solemnity of the ceremony. Do you know what I mean?

*E.*

✉ ✉ ✉

*Elizabeth,*

I'm not so sure, Elizabeth. Tuxedos and wedding dresses shouldn't determine our solemnity – the event itself should do that. Second, the pomp and circumstance we see on the wedding day is often the result of weeks of unhealthy self-absorption. Some brides lose their minds trying to find a dress for one day that might make them look like a movie star, ignoring the whole while both modesty and the mind-boggling cost of their narcissism.

Third, a black tuxedo – as effective as it is in making any guy handsome – reinforces sexist ideas about sex. Sure, it does this by default (since black was never a color alluding to sexual purity) but it does this nevertheless.

Finally, what about practicality? People usually return the tuxedos or never wear their wedding dress again. All this probably makes me sound like an anarchist, right? Well, I'm not. I simply think certain structures of the traditional wedding should be changed to allow for more public modesty and greater equality between men and women.

Instead of dresses and tuxedos, I'm for suits and dresses that will turn heads and can still be worn again. I'm for having the parents/family members participate in the ceremony in some way or another. I'm for limiting the number of people "standing up" since all they do is exactly that – stand. I'm for the bride and groom entering either together or separately – and alone.

I'm for color, flowers, music and dancing, and anything else that will enhance the ceremony.

Since I'm on a tear right now, I might as well go all out. Why, Elizabeth, are many newlyweds so bent on an expensive honeymoon? If you're normal, you spend most of the first few days in bed, and you can do that at home.

The alternative? A big party at Christmas or another holiday at which time you show your friends and family where you're living, how you're using the wedding gifts they gave you, and the wedding pictures.

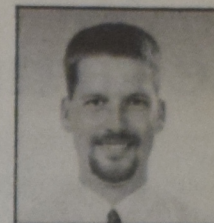
There are other reasons I'm for this option: it's what Isaac, son of Abraham, did as well.

*D.*



Elizabeth Salomons  
egs@smarrt.com

Two  
Under  
35



Dirk Schouten  
dbschouten@netscape.net

*Dirk,*

Uh, Isaac had an arranged marriage; he married a woman his father sent a servant out to find – Rebekah – and she was given to him by her brother, essentially in exchange for some nice gifts. I have a few issues with how Isaac went a-courting and I personally wouldn't use his wedding celebrations as an example to follow. (Not to mention that I'm a travel nut who's made more than enough trips alone, and would relish the opportunity to share a trip with my betrothed.)

To get back to the other things you listed: I'm all for your ideas. The most precious wedding ceremony I ever attended was held in a farmer's field. The bride and groom were simply but beautifully dressed and walked down the "aisle" hand in hand, preceded by a half dozen children. The witnesses, who were seated before the ceremony began, didn't stand beside the couple until the rings were needed.

After the ceremony, everyone sat down to hear the message spoken by a close friend of the couple. The reception was held immediately afterwards in a machine shed. It was beautiful. Wanting a simple wedding doesn't make you an anarchist, Dirk. It's simply doing more with less.

*E.*

✉ ✉ ✉

*Elizabeth,*

I totally agree with you, although I've heard of some pretty wild "creative" weddings. The wildest one I know of was one done in the air. Two sky-divers jumped out of a plane with the minister, the best man, the maid of honor, and a group of family members and friends. They said their wedding vows at 25,000 feet. But these kinds of acts are freak shows more than anything else and have nothing in common with the type of wedding you described.

As I mentioned earlier, this isn't something I lose sleep over. The wedding this summer was a moving experience and, despite my opinions, I didn't feel awkward or out of place at all. At the same time, though, I know I'll never wear a black tuxedo or "take" a woman from her father.

No way. Not in a million years.

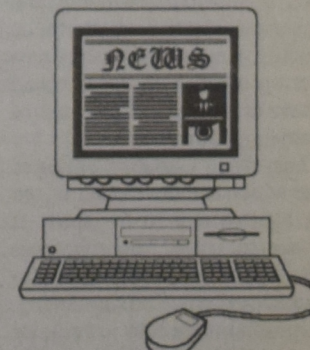
Till next time,

*Dirk*

Elizabeth Salomons is a freelance writer who lives in Vancouver. Dirk Schouten teaches literature and writing at Kosin University in South Korea.

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## Environment

# Virtue by another name: 'Core values' and the marketplace

**Elbert van Donkersgoed**

Last winter during a series of 16 workshops, members of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) challenged each other and their colleagues to come to grips with globalization in the marketplace.

One workshop conversation listed our core values for the

marketplace: fairness, honesty, integrity, justice, generosity, contentment and trust. Participants identified values that men and women of goodwill in the Christian Scriptures took with them into the marketplace: concern for community, caring for everyone, specifically the poor, respect for creation and wisdom.

Decades ago, our core values led the Christian Farmers Federation to call for stewardship in our relationship to the creation. Since then a social consensus has emerged in our culture – we will reduce soil erosion, pollution, and the extinction of species – through laws, if necessary.

Farm community initiatives,

such as environmental farm plans, nutrient management plans and best management practices, have been at the forefront of identifying options for treading lightly on the creation. There is more to be done. Greenhouse gases linked to global warming, and groundwater levels are just two of the areas needing options in the new millennium.

Working from our core values has made a difference in the quality of the environment we share today. It has made a difference for God's gift of good land, air and water.

community ingenuity. For our core values to make a difference in the global marketplace it will take more than individuals being honest and fair.

Core values always come to the fore in this most festive of seasons. I pray that the joy in our hearts will be the Spirit of God and the gift of Jesus the Savior. This is the joy that lets us look way past Christmas. Long after the wrapping and the tinsel have been recycled-it lasts and lasts. May the spirit of Christmas bring us joy that lasts all through the New Year.

## A virtuous woman in a tree

What have you been doing for the last two years? Would you trade it for life on a 6 by 8-foot platform 180 feet above the ground? Probably not? But that is exactly what a young woman has done in northern California: she's living in a redwood tree.

In an age when virtue seems dull beyond words, Julia "Butterfly" Hill is, I think, the model of a virtuous woman. She is a modern metaphor of courage and constancy. And her tree-sitting challenges not only the Pacific Lumber Company, but us Christians as well. A challenge that we dare not ignore.

### Old-growth protests won't go away

Unless we are involved directly in some aspect of the forest industry, the on-going protest over logging seldom catches our attention. But over the last decade there has been a steady round of protests around old-growth logging.

The current move to specify remedial measures for the Kyoto Accord on carbon dioxide emissions has once again highlighted forest industry practices in Canada. But northern California has been at the epicenter of a long-standing debate over the fate of the remaining old-growth redwood forests. Recent events there will have implications for Canada, sooner or later.

### New-Age spirituality and old-fashioned courage

For Julia Hill, the journey began when a life-threatening auto accident changed her life. "I decided that everything I had taken for granted had been almost taken away from me, and I had to start focusing my ... life on the real and important things," she recalls. The power of her first encounter with the giant redwood trees also left its mark. "I knew then that protecting these trees would become a spiritual quest for me."

In the fall of 1997 Hill joined the Earth First! tree-sit to protest against the activities of the Pacific Lumber Company. The group selected a 200-foot tall redwood tree in the October moonlight and christened it "Luna."

Hill's short shift stretched to a record-setting two years when she vowed not to let her feet touch ground until this tree and the others around it were protected. She has held her course against company ire in torrential rain and windstorms and on peaceful summer nights. On December 18, 1999, that quest was fulfilled when Pacific Lumber and the group signed a Preservation Agreement and Deed of Covenant ending the action.

Julia Hill is an unlikely heroine who is easily dismissed by some as a kook. Raised in a Christian home she has rejected Christian faith. Hill's Chris-

## Creation waits...

John Wood



tian upbringing has been transformed into the New-Age spirituality common among some environmental activists. "I am a spiritualist," she says. "I believe very strongly in the spirituality of the universe." I was raised in a non-denominational Christian home, but I just don't agree with organized religion in any form. I believe that God is within us and we are God. Everything is part of this universal body of life."

Statements such as that are enough for most people, especially Christians, to dismiss anything Hill does or says. Yet I wonder if we can simply ignore her actions. She presents us with at least two challenges.

### Facing challenging questions

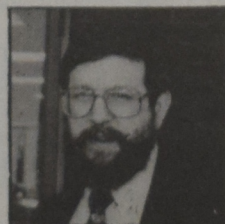
First, there is the question of law and justice. The tree-sit was illegally staged on Pacific Lumber's land. The company maintains that "we are in the business of growing and harvesting trees. The land has been zoned by the State of California for that purpose." The protesters are violating the law and the company is in the right in that regard.

On the other hand, Hill asserts that "there is no way to be in the presence of these ancient beings and not be affected. There's something more than a profit, and that's life."

She stands in a long tradition of protest against what are thought to be unjust laws. Thomas Aquinas put it this way: "The force of a law depends on the extent of its justice." "Things of real value," argues Hill, "are worth going to any length in love and respect to safeguard."

Second is the challenge that environmental activist pose to Christians. Civil disobedience has a rich history in Scripture but it is an uncomfortable subject for many today. The gospel is about transforming people and the institutions they create. The gospel is about bringing a peaceable kingdom, but also a sword that will divide.

It has taken a virtuous woman to draw our attention to one of the central questions of our day – the fate of the earth. "How then shall we live?" Francis Schaeffer asked two decades ago. A virtuous woman has once again asked that old-fashioned question.



John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

## Beyond an individual's virtue

But: Are those core values operational in the global marketplace? Those values describe how we should participate. They describe ideal behavior.

Many workshop participants felt that the global marketplace does not operate on the basis of the values and priorities that they hold dear, even though, as individuals, they take their core values with them into the marketplace. They said: we have to participate in certain activities in order to survive in the global marketplace.

Our experience with stewardship of the environment has taught us that it takes farm community initiatives to make a difference. Changing a marketplace dynamic will be no different – it takes

Elbert van Donkersgoed edits "Earthkeeping Ontario" and has been a senior staff member with the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario since 1971. This article first appeared in December in broadcast form on CFCO Radio, Chatham, Ont., and CKNX Radio, Wingham, Ont.

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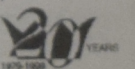
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## News Comment

## Nose for News



Bert Hielema

of which six had been unwittingly contaminated by GM soy. You can't not buy this stuff.

Our continent-wide seed bank is already polluted by the (Monsanto) "terminator" gene, which is programmed into the seed so that it cannot reproduce. Well, Brewster Keen, the author of *Farmageddon*, a successful farmer who quit growing food about 15 years ago, was horrified by the unfolding future and dedicated himself to writing and speaking about the possible dangers affecting our bodies.

Educated at the London School of Economics, Keen has both the intellectual weight and the real-life experience to challenge the political and transnational authorities. His words: "We are stressing the organism. Yields are no better and costs are higher." No wonder farmers are confused, even frightened. What if, after they have planted these crops, there is no market, because the public is deeply suspicious?

## THE ECONOMIST WROTE

about this a few weeks ago in two separate articles, citing polls that indicate that people in Germany and France are more than 80 per cent less likely to buy genetically modified food. Even Canadians are close to 70 per cent against these human-made seed components. It is a bit different in the U.S., where the gap between rich and poor is greater, and so is the lack of awareness of this issue. While less than 10 per cent of Europeans have never heard of genetically altered seeds, in the U.S. more than 30 per cent are unaware of this possible danger. Even so, 57 per cent feel uneasy about them. Last week, there was a big international conference on bio-safety in Montreal, where demonstrations were held to raise public awareness and where public hostility was quite evident.

"PHARMAGEDDON" came to my mind when I read an article in the *Seattle Times* written by a medical doctor and university faculty member. Dr. Stephen Bezruchka estimates that there are 106,000 deaths a year due to adverse reactions to pharmaceutical drugs. He also mentioned a 1991 Harvard study which suggested that 150,000 hospital deaths a year could be attributed to medical harm. Since more people die outside the hospital, a cautious underestimate of at least 300,000 deaths a year can be blamed on the wrong use of drugs and overuse of technology.

This certainly warrants the term "pharmageddon." Bezruchka

pleads for a National Center for Patient Safety in the U.S., as advocated by the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine, and concludes: "The sick, and those seeking medical care, should enter the system with all trepidation. Medical care may be harmful to your health." By now we know that healthcare has become chronically ill, another victim of the disintegration of the family and wrong monetary priorities.

A GREATER DANGER is back: nuclear Armageddon, thanks to boom times in Russia, a boom different than our economic boom, even though in the long run both will be equally destructive. This may boomerang on Putin, the acting president. Russia's senior soldiers are aping the technique of the NATO bombers practised in Kosovo and Serbia. Although the official propaganda booming from Moscow still maintains that everything is going to plan, all signs are that the Russian army in Chechnya is in trouble, and that its public is souring on the conflict.

According to the Russian propaganda machine, its army has lost 500 soldiers at the expense of 7,000 Chechens fighters. Chechnyan sources admit to 400 deaths and claim to have killed 7,000 Russians. The — more believable — (Russian) soldiers' mothers now say that 3,500 of their sons have died.

This last war started when 300 civilians were killed in apartment-house bombings, which the Kremlin blamed on the Chechnyans while the Chechnyans pointed the finger at the Russian Secret police, Putin's former employer. At any rate, the Moscow military used it as an excuse to clean out Chechnya, which has proven easier said than done because the Russian army is fighting on two fronts: Chechnya and corruption, which is so endemic that the Chechnyans' most useful weapon, the RPG-7 grenade launcher can be bought from the Russian soldiers for 20 bottles of vodka. Soldiers who have not been paid for months will sell any piece of armament just to have something to eat, and even more important, alcohol to drink.

SO HOW CAN REMOTE Chechnya pose a danger to us? A few weeks ago Vladimir Putin reversed his country's vow never to use nuclear weapons first. This announcement sent shock waves around the world and signalled the end of the post-Cold-War world and the peace dividend that never was. The U.S./NATO in bombing

Iraq in 1998 and Kosovo in 1999, which Russia opposed, made Putin and partners conclude that the West intended to reduce Russia to a status of a tertiary power.

This new nuclear policy reminds the West that Russia is the only nation in the world capable of annihilating the U.S. This spells out in blunt undiplomatic language: "Keep your hands off Chechnya; it is for us an internal matter, and even if we use tactical nuclear weapons, that is our business."

The reality is that this might well be the only means left for the Russians if they want to subdue this fiercely independent people. The Plain Truth is that Russia is not going to accept another defeat, as it did in 1994-96 in Chechnya, and before that in Afghanistan. Its national honor is at stake, which cannot allow a repeat performance.

In the extreme case, anything is possible. And that is precisely the ambiguous situation Putin wants to create. He wants Russia's antagonists — NATO, of which the U.S. and Canada are members — to peer into the abyss and be prepared for the worst. He is calculating that this will dramatically increase the respect which the current political system thinks is Russia's due.

THERE MAY BE A FLY in the ointment, however. "Those who live by the sword will die by the sword." Those who start the nuclear Armageddon, will die in the nuclear Armageddon. The CIA recently told Clinton that an A-bomb in fanatically Muslim Iran cannot be ruled out. Here is the paradox: Chechnya is also a Muslim country.

Russia's black-market forces probably have provided Iran with sufficient weapons-grade material to fabricate the Bomb. Officially Russia, still brimming with stockpiles of nuclear fuel and weapons related technology, has long sold sensitive nuclear and missile technology to Iran and assisted Tehran's civilian atomic energy program. Suppose that Iran has the Bomb.

Suppose that Russia uses tactical nuclear devices to wipe Chechnya off the map, will Iran — or Pakistan — allow this to happen? Will this mean an atomic "holy war" against Russia? Perhaps "farmageddon" and even "pharmageddon" pale in comparison to a nuclear Armageddon.

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont. His home page visitors' count is steadily mounting, currently at 130 hits. See his past columns and other writings at: [www.geocities.com/hielemab](http://www.geocities.com/hielemab)

THERE ARE TWO WORDS which sound the same (homophones) and are so new that you will not find them in a dictionary. Some day you may. They are: "farmageddon" and "pharmageddon." Brewster Keen coined the word "farmageddon" as title of a book in which he closely examines the culture of biotechnology. Culture, to me, suggests something positive. Prejudiced as I am, I prefer its opposite: barbarism.

I also deeply dislike the word "biotechnology," which literally means "the practical application of 'life' knowledge." How something that might spell death for the human race can have a label of "life" is a typical example of postmodern language adultery.

As you may have guessed, I am referring to "Frankenstein foods," as they are called in Europe. Farmers, especially the grain, corn and soya bean growers, are already depressed by decreasing prices for their products and now are also unsure whether or not to plant genetically modified (GM) crops.

The US government is so concerned about these altered seeds that its Environment Protection Agency (EPA) has decreed that no more than 50 per cent of the land may be planted with these doc-

tored specimens because more and more people are becoming allergic to these unnatural mixtures.

We now have chicken genes in potatoes, human genes in pig embryos, flounder genes in tomatoes, brazil nut genes wired into soy; and the troublesome problem is that nobody knows what the final outcome of all this tampering will be.

## GOVERNMENT EXPERTS

used to be concerned about the general health of the nation, but Canada and the U.K., in their eagerness to prove that they are serious about eliminating their deficits, started cutting back on experimental farms and test sites and in a naively trusting fashion — an impossible attitude in a cut-throat, competitive world — conceded to the multinationals the franchise to look after the health of their people.

So now we have all this GM stuff in the produce sections, colorfully and attractively displayed, but none of these so-called edibles have been safety-tested. Another disturbing aspect of genetically modified seeds is that their spores spread. The *New York Times* recently published an analysis of seven leading organic soy milks,

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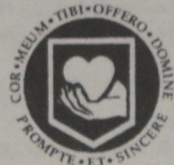
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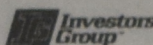
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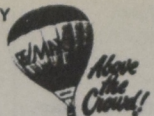
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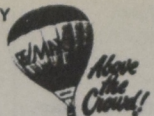
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First time uncles and aunts: John &amp; Linda Howard and new cousin Braedon C. — Mission, B.C. Sandra Howard, P.J. Howard — Abbotsford, B.C. Great aunt: Jeannette Howard — Seattle, USA Great-great-Oma: Mrs. Catharina Dykxhoo, residing in Nursing Home, Newmarket, Ont. and Granny of Parksville, Vancouver Island can't believe yet she's a great-great-Granny now!! A. &amp; H. Flikkema, 17 Roxanne Dr., St. Catharines ON L2M 3G8</p>	<p>Oostemieland, Gr. Cambridge the Neth. Ontario <b>MRS. IDA DYK (nee MOS)</b> went to be with the Lord on Tuesday, January 11, 2000. The Lord gave her 97 years to show her love to her family and friends, especially during the war where she and her family risked their lives to help others. She immigrated to Canada in 1951 and has since resided in Cambridge. The words of John 11:25 &amp; 26 are a great comfort to us all. Loving wife to the late Simon Dyk (1988). Dear mother of: Dick &amp; Ekka Dyk — Cambridge, Ont. Theresa &amp; Art Morbrook — Brantford, Ont. Beloved mother-in-law of Bert Haverkamp — Cambridge, Ont. She was a loving grandmother of 14 grandchildren, 32 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild. She was predeceased by her two daughters Frances and her husband Bert Dekker and Corrie Haverkamp, and by two brothers, four sisters and two great-grandchildren. The funeral service was held on Saturday, Jan. 15, 2000 at Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, Cambridge, Ont., Pastor Ralph Koops officiating. Correspondence address: Dick Dyk, 16 Crombie St., Cambridge ON N1S 1Y4</p>	<p>March 17, 1912 - January 14, 2000 In the certainty of meeting Jesus, <b>WILLEM RUDOLF JANSEN</b> departed this life after a brief illness. Beloved husband of Dersken (nee Wolsink) Dear father of: Henry &amp; Lynda Jansen — Newmarket, Ont. John &amp; Nell Jansen — Maple, Ont. Willie &amp; Margaret Jansen — Lefroy, Ont. Jacqueline &amp; Mike Doyle — Richmond Hill, Ont. and the late Barry Jansen. Opa of the following grandchildren: Debra, Sheryl &amp; Doug, Rick, Ken, Lisa, Janice, Leah-Anna, Patricia, and the late Tara. Correspondence address: Mrs. Dersken Jansen, 7900 McLaughlin Rd.S., Covenant Tower PH 03, Brampton ON L6Y 5A7</p> <p>It pleased the Lord to take home on January 15, 2000, our dearly beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother <b>AAGJE HOOYENGA</b> (nee Vander Sluis) in her 86<sup>th</sup> year. Beloved wife of the late Bouwe Hooyenga Sadly missed by her children: George Vander Sluis and late wife Yfke Vander Sluis — Simcoe, Ont. Enga Frankruyter and late husband Meindert Frankruyter — Brampton, Ont. Jim and Pat Hooyenga — Shelburne, Ont. Winnie and Sam Tilstra — Huttonville, Ont. Bert and Lesley Hooyenga — Sunridge, Ont. Tom and Lou Hooyenga — Simcoe, Ont. Helen and Jack Langen — Caledon East, Ont. Henry and Janet Hooyenga — Ballinafad, Ont. and the late Peter Hooyenga 30 grandchildren and 57 great-grandchildren Survived by two sisters and one brother and one brother-in-law in the Netherlands. All correspondence to: Mrs. E. Frankruyter, RR # 10, 8586 Mississauga Rd., Brampton, ON L6V 3N2</p> <p>Epe, Orillia, the Neth. Ontario February 25, 1930- January 25, 2000 The Lord called home His faithful servant, <b>GERRIT WILLEM (BILL) VAN DYK</b> Beloved husband of Hendrika (nee Poelakker) Dear father and Opa of George and Margaret — Orillia, Ont. Melissa, Kristin, Gregory Brenda and David Regts of Peachtree City, Georgia. Dear brother of: Rev. John and Paula Van Dyk — Burlington, Ont. and family, Alex Van Dyk of Edmonton, Alta. and family, Dr. John A. and Susan Van Dyk, Sioux Center, Iowa and family. The funeral service was held at the First Christian Reformed Church of Orillia, Ont. on Friday, Jan. 28, 2000. Pastor Rick Nanninga officiated. Correspondence address: Mrs. H. Van Dyk, Box 2633, Orillia, Ont. L3V 7C1</p>	<p>Koekange, Dr. Edmonton the Neth. Alta. 1924 - 1999 "My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." (Ps. 121:2) On December 2, 1999 <b>GEORGE VAN GYSSEL</b> went to be with his Lord at the age of 75, after a short time of illness. Beloved husband of Joanne Van Gysse. Dear father of: Janet &amp; Norman Noordhof — Lacombe, Alta. Barbara &amp; Rodney Venhuis — Lethbridge, Alta. Hilda &amp; Art Dykstra — Lacombe, Alta. John &amp; Dana Van Gysse — Ponoka, Alta. Cora &amp; Pete Hoekstra — Lacombe, Alta. Dearly loved by 20 grandchildren. The funeral service was held at Sonrise Christian Reformed Church, Ponoka, Alta. On December 6, 1999, Pastor A. Van Muyen officiated. Interment at Forest Home Cemetery, Ponoka, Alta. Correspondence address: Mrs. Joanne Van Gysse, 3912 - 42 St., Ponoka AB T4J 1B1</p>
	<p><b>Obituaries</b> "The Lord is my shepherd... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Ps. 23 January 15, 1922 - January 12, 2000 <b>JOHN HENRY DEBBINK</b> of the Emmanuel Home in Edmonton, Alta, went to be with his Lord and Savior to live eternally. He is survived by his loving wife Gerda, five children, Helene (Garry) VanBeek, George (Donna) Debbink, Gerald Debbink, John (Joyce), Marianne (Albert); one daughter-in-law Mary Anna Debbink; 22 grandchildren: Kevin, Gene (Monica), Steven (Terri), Jeff (fiancé Jessica), Chad, Michael, Julie, Jason, Greg, David, Ryan, Kristina, Nicole, Leslie (Sheldon), Karen, Brad, Kathy, Raymond, Antonia, Tracy, Joshua, Mikaela; three great-grandchildren: Mitchell, Tyler, Jordyn; one brother, Willem and one sister, Alberta, both of the Netherlands. John was predeceased by his four sisters, Willemina, Johanna, Hendrika and Gerda. Funeral services were held Jan. 17, 2000 at Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church, Leduc, Alta. With Pastor Harry Vriend officiating. Correspondence address: Mrs. Gerda Debbink, #335-13425 - 57 St., Edmonton AB T5A 2G1</p>	<p>"For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) On December 18, 1999, the Lord called Home our dearly beloved daughter, sister and aunt <b>COBY HOEKSTRA</b> in her 61st year. Loving wife of Koop Hoekstra of 36 years. Daughter of Fennie and the late Roelof Flokstra. Sister of: John &amp; Evie Flokstra — Mount Hope Hetty &amp; Eilt Hartman — Dundas Casey &amp; Maryke Flokstra — Hamilton Joe Flokstra — Vernon, B.C. Grace &amp; Henry Bloemsma — Ancaster Andy &amp; Margaret Flokstra — Hamilton Jeanette &amp; Greg Cross — Ancaster nieces and nephews. She will be deeply missed. Funeral service was held on December 22, 1999 at Grace Christian Reformed Church, Scarborough, Ont. Correspondence address: Mrs. Fennie Flokstra, Wellington Christian Home, #209, 1415 Upper Wellington St., Hamilton, ON L9A 5E8</p>	<p><b>Job Opportunity</b> A caregiver is needed for a Burlington Christian organization's staff person, who needs to travel. Duties involve driving children to school and assisting with their pre-school morning and post-school evening routines. <b>The successful candidate will live in or near Burlington</b> and would, at times, be required to accompany the family on business trips in but not limited to the Grand Rapids area. References are required. If you are interested please e-mail <b>Ida Mutoigo</b> at the <b>Christian Reformed Church</b> at <b>mutoigo@crcna.org</b> or call her at 905-336-2920 ext.249.</p>	
<p><b>Adoption</b> With great joy and thankfulness to God, we, Ken and Wilma Rauwerda (nee Nienhuis), welcome <b>NATHAN JEROME</b> to our family. Nathan was born March 18, 1998 and joined our family on December 27, 1999. He is a little brother to Kenny. Our very happy family resides at 44 Water St., Chatham ON N7M 3H7</p>			<p><b>For Rent</b> Two story <b>beachfront cottage</b> at <b>Turkey Point</b> on Lake Erie. Sleeps 6. Available for 1 or 2 weeks or entire month of <b>July 2000. \$ 750. week.</b> Phone 905-689-6392</p>	
	<p><b>Church News</b> <b>Financial Assistance</b> Those from congregations in Classis Niagara who are planning to or are presently studying for full-time ministry in the CRC as a pastor and/or evangelist and who are in need of financial assistance for the 2000-2001 academic year, are invited to contact the secretary of the Student Fund Committee — Louie VanderBerg, 1662 Second Ave., RR 3, St. Catharines, ON L2R 6P9. Tel.: 905-641-1496, Fax: 905-641-4624. Application form deadline is March 15, 2000.</p>	<p><b>Personal</b> 52-year-old Christian lady, divorced four years, wishes to meet a <b>trustworthy and caring Christian man.</b> Please send letters to file #2701 c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.</p>	<p><b>For Sale</b> <b>Dutch commentaries</b> for sale: complete set of <b>Korte Verklaring</b> (62 vols.) And 27 vols. of <b>Commentaar</b> (19 on O.T., 8 on N.T.) <b>Asking \$400. obo.</b> Please call 705-326-1721 after 4 o'clock.</p>	
<p><b>Vacations</b> Fully equipped luxury condominium at Cranberry Resort, Collingwood, Ont., 5 min. to Blue Mountain. Skiing, Spa, pools, cycling, hiking, etc. <b>Two bedrooms, sleeps 7. \$600/week, \$300/weekend.</b> In Niagara call 905-386-6976; Toronto 905-877-0408.</p>			<p><b>Miscellaneous</b> <b>REFORMED FAITH AND LIFE</b> A Broadcast and Literature Ministry, Proclaims the Gospel in Armenia. For information write to: <b>R.F.L., 12233 S.70th Ave</b> <b>Palos Heights, IL 60463</b></p>	

*Advertise in our monthly  
Business Directory for  
only \$25 plus GST.*



## Classifieds

## Teachers

## WINDSOR, Ont.:

Looking for a Challenge?

## An Opportunity?

**Maranatha Christian Secondary School** is expanding to include Grade 10 in September!

Dynamic teachers interested in a growing school with a future in an Interdenominational setting are invited to apply for **Junior High positions** in: **English, History, Mathematics, Science, Careers, Civics, Business, Bible, French, Band, Drama, Ph.Ed. and Technology** courses.

Send application and complete resume, including statement of Vision of Christian Education to:

**William Van Dyke, Principal**  
**Maranatha Christian Secondary School**  
 939 Northwood St., Windsor ON N9E 2B4  
 Information: 519-966-7424  
 Fax: 519-966-9519

## Job Opportunities

## APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED for a POSSIBLE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL POSITION

**Abbotsford Christian School**, a multi-denominational school system serving over 1100 students at 3 campuses, is inviting applications for a **possible elementary (K-7) principal** at our Clayburn Hills Campus.

We are looking for an experienced and enthusiastic leader who is deeply committed to Christian education and is excited about working as part of a leadership team.

*Application deadline: February 18, 2000.*

Please direct resumes or inquiries to:  
**Eric Van Egmond**  
 Vice Chairman — ACS Board  
 2849 Woodland St., Abbotsford, BC V2S 4E5  
 Phone: 604-859-2499; Fax 604-859-9995

## Job Opportunities

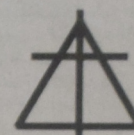
**The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) has a full-time opening for a East/South Africa Geographical Ministries Team (GMT) Leader for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).**

Responsibilities include giving leadership to the GMT, ensuring that the members achieve their performance impacts and outcomes and assist them in acquiring skills, accepting responsibility for results, and learning to function independently.

The successful applicant must be a Christian with a Reformed perspective. Masters degree preferred with four years community development work in the international arena. Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of CRWRC's programs and the ability to travel is required. This position will be based in Kenya, East Africa.

A detailed job description is available upon request. For consideration, submit a letter of interest along with a copy of your resume by Feb. 25 to:

**Director of Personnel**  
**Christian Reformed Church in North America**  
 2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE  
 Grand Rapids, MI 49560-0500  
 phone: 616-224-5881 fax: 616-224-5895  
 e-mail: colemann@crcna.org



## Job Opportunity

**Small custom woodworking shop** looking for a **cabinet maker**. Experience is a definite asset. Must know woodworking machinery and hand tools. Type of work ranges from a wide variety of projects involving a variety of skills and knowledge. Position is available effective immediately.

Please send resume to **Woods 'N' Stuff, 1304 Balfour St., Fenwick ON L0S 1C0**  
 Fax: 905-892-0385

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL  
Victoria, B.C.

Come to the beautiful West Coast and join a dynamic and enthusiastic staff in a thriving, interdenominational K-12 school system of 730 students.

## CHRISTIAN TEACHERS REQUIRED FOR 2000/2001 School Year

\* Elementary full-time P.E. and Athletic Director  
 \* High School Learning Assistance, English, and Drama  
 Teachers must be committed Christians and certifiable by the BC College of Teachers.

Send letter of application, resume and statement of faith to:

**Bill Helmus, Elementary Principal** **John Messelink, Secondary Principal**  
**Pacific Christian School** **Pacific Christian School**  
 671 Agnes St., Victoria, BC 654 Agnes St., Victoria, BC  
 V8Z 2E7 V8Z 2E6  
 Phone: 250-479-9365 Phone: 250-479-4532  
 Fax: 250-479-3685 Fax: 250-479-3511

Smile! You're on  
 Christian Courier's  
 classified pages.

## WOODLAND CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

R.R. #1 BRESLAU, ONTARIO

invites applications for the position of

## DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

*This position will involve all aspects of the management and development of the school's financial resources. This includes responsibility for:*

- the expansion of the school's membership and support base
- long-term financial planning and budget preparation
- development of long-term goals and strategies for fund raising
- supervision of tuition accounts and day to day bookkeeping

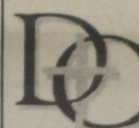
The successful candidate will be a person fully committed to the Christian faith, will understand the Christian school communities, and will be able to support the vision, mission, and goals of this Christian school. S/he will be an effective communicator, a self-starter and an effective team worker with strong organizational abilities and strong people skills. Skills in accounting and budgeting will be required.

It is expected that this initially will be a half-time position with possible expansion in the future. Salary will be commensurate with experience and qualifications.

Please submit applications by March 1, 2000.

Please direct inquiries and applications to:  
**Joleen VanderHeide, Secretary, the Board of Trustees**  
**Woodland Christian High School**  
 R.R.#1 Breslau, ON N0B 1L0  
 phone: 519-648-2114 fax: 519-648-3402

## DORDT COLLEGE



## FACULTY POSITIONS

Dordt College is seeking applications for openings beginning August 2000 in the following areas:

## FACULTY

## Education

Introduction, upper-level, and possibly graduate levels with emphasis on special education

## Engineering

Mechanical

## Foreign Language

Spanish

## Psychology (Possible position)

General/Applied

## Theatre Arts (2 positions)

Design and Theatre History

Directing and Acting

## Theology (One year position)

General education courses in biblical theology and upper level biblical studies courses

Evaluation of applications will continue until the positions are filled. To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and a curriculum vitae/resume to:

**Dr. Rockne McCarthy**  
 Vice President for Academic Affairs  
 Dordt College  
 498 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE  
 Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697

Telephone: 712 722-6333  
 Facsimile: 712 722-4496  
 E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu  
 Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/acadaff

## DORDT COLLEGE

*Dordt College encourages the nominations and candidacies of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities.*



## Classifieds

## Teachers

## TORONTO, Ont.:

Toronto District Christian High School invites applicants for: a **computer teacher**, a **Bible teacher** and a **vice principal/teacher** in charge of student life and discipline (dean of students). These positions begin August 1, 2000. Please send a resume complete with a list of references, a transcript of all university courses taken, and a statement of faith to

Ren Siebenga, TDCH,  
377 Woodbridge Ave, Wood-  
bridge ON L4L 2S8. E-mail:  
rsiebeng@tdchristian.on.ca

## HOUSTON, B.C.:

Houston Christian School invites applications from teachers for a **possible upper elementary teaching position** (Gr. 3-6) for the 2000-2001 school year. We expect about 80-85 students in Gr. K-6 in September. Houston is a forestry-based community of about 5000 people. Our students attend four local churches: Baptist, Canadian Reformed, Christian Reformed and Pentecostal. Resumes and inquiries will be welcomed by:

Jack VandenBorn, principal  
Houston Christian School  
Box 237, Houston BC V0J 1Z0  
Phone: 250-845-7736  
Fax: 250-845-7738  
E-mail: hcs@mail.bulkley.net

Send ads to this e-mail  
address:  
ccadpromo@aol.com

## First Christian Reformed Church of Thunder Bay, Ontario

is inviting applications for a **Director of Ministries** with the main emphasis on **Youth and Evangelism**. The successful candidate must be committed to the Reformed faith, biblical inerrancy, 6-day creation, male headship and covenantal theology. Please send your resume to:

Search Committee, c/o Mrs. Faye Dykstra,  
2570 Veradale St., Thunder Bay, Ont., Canada, P7K 1B7  
For more information call Mr. Allan Streutker at (807) 939-1691.

**Christ Community Church of Victoria Island  
in southwestern B.C. is seeking a  
full-time Pastor  
(May consider part-time applicants.)**

CCC is one of two C.R.C. churches in Victoria with 128 professing members, many young families and an average worship attendance of 200. We emphasize friendship evangelism and contemporary worship with dynamic preaching. We have numerous youth and adult programs and an active ministry to the physically and mentally challenged. To correspond with us in confidence or to request an information package please contact:

H. DeGroot c/o  
Christ Community Church,  
3897 Holland Ave.,  
Victoria B.C. V8Z 5K2  
ph: (250) 658-0052  
fax: (250) 479-3297 Or  
e-mail: jdegroot@uvic.ca.

## DORDT COLLEGE

Vice President for Student Services

Dordt College invites applications and nominations for the position of Vice President for Student Services. Serving on the president's cabinet, the VPSS provides leadership for all Student Services' staff and programs of the college. Areas of responsibility include promoting services for students in areas such as student housing, food service, student activities, residence life, spiritual activities, career development, job placement, counseling services and student publications as well as encouraging the total development of all students. The VPSS will also supervise the security staff, attend to health and safety concerns of students, implement the student conduct policy, represent the Student Services Division with other college agencies and the community and serve on various administrative and student-related committees.

Effective communication and interpersonal skills which enhance team work are necessary. A graduate degree is required and experience in higher education and administration or a similar setting is desired. Candidates with a graduate degree in an appropriate field are preferred.

Enthusiastic Christians with a commitment to the Reformed faith and the desire to help lead a dynamic and growing institution are invited to send a letter of application and resume to the Director of Human Resources at the address below. Review of applications will begin on February 15 and continue until the position is filled.

## DORDT COLLEGE

498 Fourth Ave. NE  
phone 712-722-6017

Sioux Center, IA 51250  
fax: 712-722-1198

*Dordt College is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applications by women, minorities, and disabled persons.*

## TOLLENDALE VILLAGE

a Christian Senior Retirement Community  
in Barrie, Ontario is now accepting  
applications for

**Superintendent/Maintenance Mgr.**

This self-motivated individual will be responsible for a variety of routine maintenance duties, including general repairs, mowing and trimming of lawns, snowclearing of pedestrian areas, mechanical maintenance of equipment, cleaning of all outside and internal common areas, as well as responding to on-site emergencies. Knowledge and experience in general carpentry, plumbing, electricity, and HVAC would be a real asset.

**Part-Time Nurse**

The position requires someone who is committed to assisting the elderly. This person will be responding to the medical and social needs of the tenants, and coordinating a relationship with the local medical community, as well as assisting in organizing recreational and other social activities. It will involve assisting tenants with medications and other similar functions. The individual must be a Registered Nurse with experience in geriatrics or related fields.

Tollendale Village is a Christian Retirement Community and is committed to providing for the residential, spiritual, social, cultural physical and emotional needs of its residents in a Christian environment, while recognizing their individuality and dignity. All staff will be encouraged to subscribe to this vision when dealing with the tenants and should be sensitive to both the spiritual and material needs of the occupants.

The positions available would be ideal for a semi-retired couple with experience in both areas. Individual applicants are also encouraged. A two-bedroom apartment on the main floor is available for the Superintendent.

Please send your letters of interest or resume to:

Tollendale Village  
P.O. Box 28036  
Barrie ON, L4N 7W1

Attn: Mr Sid Tjeerdsma, Executive Director  
Tel: (705) 722-0469

(We thank all those who apply, however only those chosen for an interview will be contacted)

## Hamilton District Christian High School

The Board of Directors invites qualified applicants to apply for the position of

**Principal**

The successful candidate should possess the following:

- a Reformed vision of education as part of God's Kingdom
- a deep faith in Jesus Christ as Lord of all creation
- creative skills in the development of high quality curricula
- the ability to hone the craft of Christian teaching
- the ability to think globally and creatively
- genuine love for students and the ability to listen empathetically
- the ability to be an organized and effective leader of a highly professional team
- a proven and successful performance record in administration

A job description is available upon request.

We are a dynamic, Reformed, Christ-centred school serving 560 students from 30 denominations. Our students experience fulfilment in learning and in serving others, and they recognize themselves as God's unique creations. The 50 member staff share in the responsibility and joy of educating teenagers fit for service in the Kingdom. We believe that "learning to serve the Master together" is a motto worth our total energy.

Hamilton District Christian High School  
92 Glancaster Road  
Ancaster, ON L9G 3K9  
Attention: Henk deZoete  
Chairperson of the Selection Committee  
phone: 905-648-6655  
fax: 905-648-3139

Please submit your application and references in writing prior to February 11, 2000.  
Interviews of selected candidates will be held on Saturday, February 26, 2000.



## Events/Classifieds

## Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

- Feb. 27** Spring Concert with the Redeemer College Concert Choir on Sunday, Feb. 27, 2000 at 8 p.m. in the **Redeemer College Auditorium**. Free admission, freewill offering. For info. call 905-648-2131 or see our web site [www.redeemer.on.ca](http://www.redeemer.on.ca)
- March 4** Tollendale Village Christian Seniors Retirement Community, **Barrie, Ont.** Open House on Saturday, March 4, 2000 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For info. call 705-722-0469.
- March 5** Dutch Service - Ancaster CRC, Hwy. 53, **Ancaster**, 3 p.m., Rev. Ralph Koops. (#) (date changed)
- March 12** A Celebration of Unity: The Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church invite you to a special service to honour Christ's prayer: "That They May Be One", Redeemer College (777 Garner Rd., **Ancaster**) on Sunday 5:00 p.m. Guest speaker: Rev. M. Goheen, with joint choirs and praise teams.
- March 13** **Redeemer College Minister's Conference 2000**, on Monday, March 13. Morning and Afternoon Lectures. Dr. Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Theological Seminary. Theme: "Reformed and Evangelical Together." Registration info: 905-648-2131, ext. 4208.
- March 25** Family Outreach Ontario Conference, Jubilee Fellowship CRC, **St. Catharines**, registration 8:30 a.m.

## TOLLENDALE VILLAGE

a Christian Seniors Retirement Community  
Located at 271 Tollendale Mill Rd. in Barrie, Ontario

*Is Now Taking Reservations for Phase 2*

Open House on Sat. March 4, 2000  
9:00 am to 5:00 pm

This planned Christian Retirement Community located on 14 acres of prime residential land adjacent to an extensive City owned natural park and close to numerous other recreational facilities, will ultimately contain 300 Independent Living apartments, 20 semi-detached garden units and a 70 bed Extended Care facility, as well as a large number of amenities. The first phase which is under construction, and will be ready for occupancy in the Spring of 2000, consists of a 3 storey 66 unit, one and two bedroom apartment building and the 20 semi-detached garden units. In this Phase 1 there are still 4 Garden Units still available. Because of the tremendous response to Phase 1, the Board has decided to proceed with Phase 2 which consists of another similar 66 unit apartment building, and for which reservations are now being accepted. This phase is scheduled for construction this summer and occupancy in the Spring 2001.

If you or any of your family members are interested in knowing more about Tollendale Village, come and visit us at the Open House to obtain a complete package of information as to how you might become a part of this exciting and vibrant Christian Retirement Community. If you are unable to come to the Open House, you can reach us at any time by contacting:

Mr. Sid Tjeerdsma, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 28036  
Barrie ON, L4N 7W1  
Tel: (705) 722-0469

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ph: 011-31-511-424114  
fax: 011-31-511-424015  
In Canada call Mrs. Henny  
Huiskamp at 613-393-5256



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKERS

## Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

*The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is a ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. It has been active in development and relief work around the world for 35 years and is currently working with some 135 partners in 30 countries.*

CRWRC has several long-term positions available in East Africa, Latin America, and southeast Asia and is seeking individuals who meet the following qualifications:

- A Christian with a Reformed perspective;
- Demonstrated ability to express their faith through a community development ministry;
- A college or university diploma or degree;
- Education and/or experience in international community development work;
- Experience in working and/or living in cross-cultural environment;
- Demonstrated ability to speak more than one language.

Preference will be given to those with overseas experience and linguistic skills. Ability to relocate and accept a two or three year assignment is required.

Please submit your resume to:  
**Director of Personnel**  
**Christian Reformed Church**  
**in North America**  
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE  
Grand Rapids MI USA  
49560-0500  
phone: 616-224-5881  
fax: 616-224-5895  
e-mail: [colemann@crna.org](mailto:colemann@crna.org)



## "THAT THEY MAY BE ONE"

The Reformed Church in America &  
the Christian Reformed Church invite you to

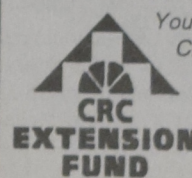
## "A Celebration of Unity"

to be held in Redeemer College  
777 Garner Rd., Ancaster, Ontario  
Sunday, March 12, 2000 at 5:00 p.m.

Guest Preacher: Rev. M. Goheen  
with joint choirs and praise teams

## We could really use your investment now.

Your funds will be invested in Christian Reformed  
Church and Christian school building projects in  
Canada.



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Reformed churches  
and Christian schools  
since 1970\*

## RATES TO MARCH 31, 2000:

Ext.fnd: 5.25 %  
RRSP: 5.60 % (approx.)  
call: 416-461-1207  
write: Christian Reformed Extension Fund  
45 Harriet St., Toronto, ON M4L 2G1  
fax: 416-465-6367

Smithers Christian  
Reformed Church.

situated in a beautiful mountain valley of  
Northwest British Columbia is seeking a

Full-time  
Pastor/Director

Our young, growing congregation of 550 members requires an ordained or non-ordained youth leader who will give direction and leadership to our existing youth programs. Those who have a passion for this ministry and are committed to a Reformed perspective may direct their resume and/or inquiries to our pastor,

Rev. Jim Poelman,  
(250) 847-3452

E-mail: [jpoelman@bulkeley.netor](mailto:jpoelman@bulkeley.netor)  
Box 2257, Smithers, B.C. V0J 2N0  
Request a church profile at  
FAX: (250) 847-5710



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Dr. Richard Eppinga, CFRE, Calvin Seminary  
3233 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546 USA  
616-957-8592 or 800-388-6034 or [eppidi@calvin.edu](mailto:eppidi@calvin.edu)



## News

# Georgian Baptists deliver relief to Chechen refugees

Felix Corley

TBILISI, Georgia (Compass) — Members of the former Soviet province of Georgia's 5,000-strong Baptist Church have been among the first to provide assistance to the thousands of refugees from war-torn Chechnya. The refugees have struggled across the mountain border into Georgia to escape the continuing fighting. In the latest mission in mid-January to the Pankisi valley in remote northern Georgia, three hours drive from the capital Tbilisi, Baptists brought much-needed school textbooks for refugee children.

Malkhaz Songulashvili, presiding bishop of the Union of Evangelical Christians/Baptists in Georgia, reported on January 18 that during the visit of the Baptist group, which arrived in the region on January 13, schoolbooks and other materials were handed over. "As soon as we got out of the car," Songulashvili reported, "I heard an infant voice calling me: 'Have you brought the text books?' I was so delighted that I could say Yes to the boy. The entire school started an overwhelming celebration upon the arrival of books."

Songulashvili believes there was a deeper reason for the joy. "I think it was not the books that made them extremely happy but the feeling that they are not forgot-



ten...., that there are people who care for them."

## Cultural differences create tension

The local school has some 510 pupils, both refugee and local children. However, soon after delivering the supplies Songulashvili and his colleagues noticed that the happiness was not shared by the Georgian-speaking headmaster and some of the teachers. "Not only refugee pupils, but our children also need school textbooks and care," said one teacher quietly.

Songulashvili explained, "Her statement encouraged the rest of the local teachers to start complaining about the difficulty of their life. One can easily understand their jealousy. Before the war and the refugees came, who on the earth knew where the Pankisi valley was? It was a kind of dead

end of the main roads in Georgia. Now you can see a lot of international and national leaders visiting the region trying to help and listen to the refugees. The local people had never had such a chance. They feel somehow sidelined from the whole picture."

Songulashvili notes that the local population had done much to welcome the refugees who had fled across the mountains from Chechnya. Some homes have taken in up to 20 refugees. "Now the refugees are receiving aid while the needs of the local people tend to be ignored. The local people have shown remarkable hospitality towards the refugees so far, but it is clear that cultural differences between the Georgian Chechens (Kists) and the Chechen refugees coming from Chechnya can create some tensions."

The Kists have lived in Georgia for some two centuries and speak both Chechen and Georgian. "By faith they have remained Muslim. Recently after the fall of Communism the Muslim faith is being revived among them. Especially the younger and older generations are very serious about their faith while the middle generation, who have been brought up during the communist time, seem to be less attracted by the faith."

The region has suffered from the economic collapse over the past decade, Songulashvili reports, and the deputy head of the school told him that many parents can no longer afford to buy school books for their children.

## Mafia extortion

Songulashvili reports that the Baptists have been planning to restore an old bath-house in the village of Duisi to provide washing facilities for the estimated 6,000 refugees there. However, the local mafia have reportedly demanded at least 6,000 Lari (some \$3,000). "I have decided to ask the governor of the district to intervene," declares Songulashvili, who has resolved not to pay any bribes.

Songulashvili, along with Naira Gelashvili of the Caucasian House, would also like to establish a Rehabilitation and Educational Centre for the refugee children. "The children of the war have accumulated an incredible amount of hatred and fear. The centre would be open for all the children who need psychological counselling and care." The ideal location would be the Pankisi valley, although he reports that the remote location might make finding qualified staff difficult, and problems with the mafia may yet threaten the realization of the Centre.

The Baptists have already made



High over Tbilisi stands this enormous statue - the Mother of Georgia. With a sword for her enemies in one hand and a cup of wine for her friends and guests in the other, she symbolizes the love of freedom and the hospitality of Georgians.

several aid trips to the refugees, including a visit on December 25, when Georgian Baptists celebrated Christmas Day. On December 30 a group led by Marina Maisashvili, head of the Baptists' Diaconal Order, visited the region to deliver food and other supplies.

The Baptist assistance is being channelled through the Beteli Charity Association, set up by the Baptist Union of Georgia to handle the church's humanitarian projects.

Both Songulashvili and the general secretary of the Union, Merab Gaprindashvili, are clear about what they see as the religious imperative to support the Chechen refugees. "The Muslim people of Chechnya should know that Christians in Georgia and beyond care about them," they declare. However, they deny any political motivation. "We as Georgian Baptists have no desire to be involved in politics, even though our humanitarian activity for the benefit of children is unfairly considered as aid to the Chechen terrorists, which is ridiculous," says Songulashvili.

## The poor helping the poor

Urged to help by a member of the Central Baptist Church in Tbilisi, Songulashvili says they decided to respond, in spite of their own poverty. "Most of our people are poor, but it is also clear that the poor can understand the poor better than anybody else, and we are determined to do our best to help them."

Members of the Central Baptist Church in Tbilisi took all the funds they collected from their recent Christmas celebration in the Baptist community and donated it to help the refugees.

## News Digest

### Wedding of millennium

NIAGARA FALLS, Ont. (CP) — The Honeymoon Capital of the World, Niagara Falls, Ont., will host a mass wedding of 1,000 couples, who will gather in the winter beauty of Queen Victoria Park to tie the knot on Valentine's Day. The Falls will provide the scenic backdrop for what is billed as the "Wedding of the Millennium."

Couples will be greeted by the romantic sounds of a symphonic band as they leave motor coaches and are ushered to the wedding area. A minister will perform the non-denominational ceremony and marry the group en masse. When the couples kiss, red and white fireworks with hearts and interlocking rings will be set off over the Falls.

"Couples entering into new marriages and those wishing to renew their vows" are welcome to participate, say the organizers: the Winter Festival of Lights, Niagara Falls Tourism and Ontario 2000.

### World's fattest mayor

PORRINO, Spain — The little town of Porrino in north-west Spain has a new tourist attraction: a mayor who's really feeling the weight of office. Weighing in at 394 pounds, Jose Manuel Barros has entered the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the world's fattest mayor, reports the *Toronto Star*.

"I did nothing to deserve this except eat non-stop," says Barros, adding ruefully, "I would have preferred to be named Mr. Universe." His favourite food is tripe.

### Orange cats a problem

BELLEVUE, Wash. — Debbie Dawson, 44, of Bellevue, Wash., is a freelance cat rescuer. "It's a service hobby, and a lot of the cats are appreciative," she told the *Seattle Times*.

Dawson made the first of her 250 rescues 15 years ago, up a tree at night. Orange cats, she finds, generally have attitudes and are most likely to run to the treetop when she comes climbing. Many other types of cats climb to her. But never the orange ones.

"I'll talk to people on the phone and they'll say, 'It's up there yelling, and it won't come down.' And I say, 'It's orange, isn't it?' More often than not, they're orange."



# Holland

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